

# **The Challenges of a Change in Practice**

*The story of an experienced principal's journey through the change process  
at a struggling urban elementary school*

by

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## **Abstract**

This study examines the challenges and complexities within the role of a building principal during a time of reform. Presented from the lens and voice of an experienced principal who came to a struggling urban elementary school, this portrayal represents three years of key moments of change as collected, described and interpreted from the lens of the principal. Compiled as a series of narrative accounts, the storied snapshots were crafted from personal journal notes along with supporting details obtained from sources such as meeting notes, emails, surveys and other day-to-day documents reflecting a change in practice.

Organized around several collections of “key moments of change,” rich description and additional narrative devices are used to examine various human experiences related to leading during change. A representation of stakeholders within a building are portrayed – teachers, support staff, parents. Along with a description of the external environment and context from this single instance of change, the underlying emotions, hopes, reactions and moral dispositions of the building level leader interacting with others is examined and interpreted.

The study reveals that leading during change holds unique challenges that are frequently in conflict. Both a sense of rigidity needed to meet the present accountability required from schools yet a flexibility to deal with the diverse human side of teachers, students and parents is required within the role. Throughout the study, specific examples of these paradoxes and dichotomies are described and interpreted.



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## PREFACE

*This book is dedicated to those who made experiencing and recapturing the story of Jefferson School possible.*

To Frank, Nicole, Frankie and my parents...thanks for the love, support and encouragement.

To Sue... I will forever be grateful for your guidance, friendship and inspiration. What a model of leadership you have been for me.

To Kyra...whose little body, big laugh and even bigger soul embraced me and the children at Jefferson School.

And finally... to Kortega and Deshayne who made each moment a joy and the telling of the story a must.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION THE CHALLENGES OF CHANGE**

### **A Change in Leadership**

In 2003, I joined the Fairfield School District as the principal of Jefferson Elementary where I served in this capacity for three years. With failing test scores, a mass exodus of teachers and record-low morale, experienced building level leadership was sought after for this struggling urban elementary school. A team from the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Urban Education had recently joined the district to work with administrators, teachers and the board to improve student achievement in the district. In July of that year, I sat in the boardroom at the central administration office and listened to members of the leadership team tell me of their wish to build a community of collaborative learners at the fractured Jefferson School.

At the time, I held a successful principalship at a large rural elementary school of nine hundred students. I had been a school administrator for six years and a teacher for nineteen. My school had a strong staff, enjoyed high levels of student achievement and flourished under community and parental support. I was very happy in my position and was not looking to move.

Since that day, I've often been asked and even asked myself – what drew me to Fairfield? Why would I consider leaving a successful school to take a principalship at a school that was in Corrective Action, knowing the emphasis and accountability that No Child Left Behind was putting on building level leadership? Why would I want to leave a beautiful building with many resources to come to a poor, tattered community with a troubled school?

It was during a review of coursework for the University of Pittsburgh that I became aware of the project from Dr. Nancy Donald, Chief Academic Officer at Fairfield. She told me about her work with the project and let me know they were looking for an experienced building principal. As I listened to her talk, I thought the work sounded fascinating and became intrigued with the idea.

When I began to entertain the thought of working in a failing urban school, I was drawn to the notion of work that would no doubt be challenging and difficult but that I also believed would be meaningful and rewarding. Feeling the depth of the challenge but also the passion of the other adults in the room, I knew this was a team I wanted to join. At this point in my career, I welcomed the chance to truly make a difference – something I believed almost instantly that this team of individuals would collectively do.

### **A Change in Practice**

Facilitating change in any educational organization can prove to be an extremely difficult endeavor. Although change is often described in terms of the large organization, lasting educational change comes about when individual development occurs within the social context of each individual classroom (Elmore, 2000; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 1993; Rosenholtz, 1989; Lortie, 1975). Ultimately, it is the quality of pupil-teacher interaction as it plays out within everyday situations that determine whether educational change stands or falls. When organizations are able to develop cultures of continuous improvement that enhance classroom instruction and authentic student learning over a period of time, this change can be labeled as “change in practice” (Fullan, 2001, p. 37).

While many programs and policies have brought about short-term results, efforts that ultimately impact teaching and learning are much more difficult to achieve and elusive to many struggling districts. Bringing to the table my experience as an elementary principal and educator, I hoped to work with the University of Pittsburgh's leadership team and the teachers at Jefferson School to bring about long term change that would improve student learning through shared decision-making, collaborative learning and a focus on authentic pedagogy.

### **The Paradox of Change**

Educational reform rose to the forefront of public discussion in the 1950's when the United States federal government launched a series of large-scale national curriculum reform initiatives peaking in 1983 with the publishing of "A Nation at Risk" (The National Commission on Excellence in Education for the United States Department of Education, 1983). Since then, much attention has been devoted to describing, following and analyzing the failures and successes of various school reform programs (Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Sarason, 1990; Goodlad, 1984; Ravitch, 1983; Lortie, 1975).

Traditionally, political and educational leaders focused on the specific elements of innovation and reform. Then, in the 1990's, another group of educational theorists emerged who began to assert that the change process itself also merited attention (Senge et al., 1999; Fullan, 1993; Peters, 1987; Marris, 1975; Schon, 1971). For those operating within the realm of school reform movements, how people experienced change was found to be just as critical as the programs or practices that were to be changed (Fullan, 2001).



The body of research on the change process is quite extensive. As I began to sort through the many books, articles and papers I came to regarding school reform, I kept returning to the work of Michael Fullan. In his earliest work, Fullan (1993) denotes a list of eight generalizations about the change process he calls the “lessons of change” (p. 21-22). They are as follows: 1) you can’t mandate what matters; 2) change is a journey not a blueprint; 3) problems are our friends; 4) vision and strategic planning come later; 5) individualism and collectivism must have equal power; 6) neither centralization nor decentralization works; 7) connection with the wider environment is critical for success; and 8) every person is a change agent.

### **The Challenges of Change**

Fullan’s lessons, in combination with additional research from the field, began to hold connections for me to some key moments of change that those at Jefferson School were experiencing. Using Fullan’s lessons as a starting place and looking to additional literature on leadership and reform, I also began to read and think about the lessons’ implications for leaders.

Fullan tells us this regarding *his* lessons, “each is somewhat of a paradox and a surprise relative to our thinking about change...” (p. 21). As I started to explore the literature on change and leadership, I began to see that the dichotomies and paradoxes of change that Fullan spoke of regarding teachers, could also be seen in the literature on leadership. Framing the paradoxes and dichotomies of change as questions that arise for leaders, I began to look to the literature to see what others have found related

to what these challenges might specifically mean for principals who are leading reform efforts.

***CHALLENGE 1: If leaders cannot get people to change simply by telling them to do so, what moves people to change?***

How often have leaders in today's schools heard, "Just tell me what to do and I'll do it"? Successful organizations create structures where groups come together to determine why change is necessary and how to best attempt it. As administrators and teachers begin to move away from traditional leadership roles that center on control, a new way of thinking about decision-making has to be learned by both leaders and teachers (Elmore, 2000; Senge et. al., 1999; Sergiovanni, 1999, 1996, 1992; Dufour & Eaker, 1998).

In the business world, where profits are the bottom line, researchers have begun to study leadership roles to learn from companies that are enjoying success. Jim Collins (2001), in *Good to Great*, notes that high achieving companies do not necessarily have a traditional leader who controls the company. Rather, the company has a leader who carefully chooses a team of experts, "puts them in the right seats" and "lets them figure out the best path of greatness for the bus" (p. 13).

Tom Peters (1987) further elaborates on this leadership style in *Thriving on Chaos*. He notes that often the best way to manage the workplace is to maximize involvement... "the chief reason for our failure in world class competition (in business) is our failure to tap our work force's potential" (p. 345). Because the global marketplace is

changing at such a fast rate, Peters notes that companies found to be most successful have “embraced chaos” and “learned to love change” (p. 56) as a way to succeed.

Likewise, in education it is when administrators team with groups of teachers and each take individual and collective responsibility for decision-making regarding teaching and learning that schools really begin to improve (Senge et al., 1999; Sergiovanni, 1999; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Schmoker, 1996; Fullan, 1993; Barth, 1990). Yet, many of our schools do not have structures in place to allow stakeholders to work together so teaching and administrative decision-making frequently occur in isolation.

In *The Dance of Change*, Senge (1999) posits that authority figures cannot dictate the inspiration, motivation or other catalysts necessary for deep lasting reform. And, very often when superintendents, school boards, principals, and other decision makers demand change without seeking input from all involved the stage is set for years of repeated failure, setback, and backlash. Horth and Palus (2002), through “The Center for Creative Leadership,” report leaders spend 10% of their time analyzing problems and 90% solving them. What occurs, then, is solutions often do not work because enough questions were never asked. In these situations, leaders find themselves back at the table looking for different solutions. Employees, over time, develop the mindset that if solutions will be wrong and changed anyway, why put too much effort into them?

New ideas and initiatives require a depth of understanding. Pascale (1990) tells us “the more that mandates are used, the more fads prevail and the more that change is seen as superficial and marginal to the real purpose of teaching” (p. 20). And in *Leading Minds*, Howard Gardner (1995) shares that the ideas of leaders are particularly

vulnerable to noncompliance when they intersect with competing counter ideas of their followers. When previously formed ideas have “drenched the consciousness” (p. 16) of those involved, change becomes even more difficult.

As Gardner (1995) notes “power can direct and guide an inner circle and a wider polity” (p. 16) but it can’t determine what really matters most to individuals. People need to sort that out for themselves. For leaders at building-level positions and particularly those in struggling environments, a challenge becomes how to step back yet still lead.

***CHALLENGE 2: If leadership cannot predetermine the path of change, how can people be prepared for the journey?***

Educational change is a complicated phenomenon. Unlike simple cause/effect linkages, educational change does not take on a linear path (Senge et. al., 1999; Fullan, 1993; Stacey, 1992; Pascale, 1990). When a new variable enters a situation, both planned and unplanned ramifications occur. Fullan (1993) specifies, “every new variable that enters the equation, those unpredictable but inevitable noise factors, produce ten other ramifications, which in turn produce ten other ramifications, which in turn produce ten other reactions and on and on...” (p. 19).

Pascale (1990) notes that “change doesn’t follow straight line logic—it conforms to a kind of curved logic that changes the nature of things and often turns them into opposites” (p. 25) while Stacey (1992), in *Managing the Unknowable*, explains that anytime one is exploring new territory, “the route and destination must be discovered through the journey itself” (p. 1). Senge (1999) summarizes, “Dynamic complexity is the

real territory of change. The goal is to get into the habit of experiencing and thinking about the educational change process as an overlapping series of dynamically complex phenomena” (p. 365).

Rather than using lines, organizations can think of change in terms of circles, “a new framework for thinking is embedded...a switch is thrown...we see feedback processes and systems archetypes...we become looped...” (Senge et. al., 1999, p. 365). As people venture into new territory and take risks and try out solutions, things inevitably change. Complexity, dynamism and unpredictability all become normal parts of the change process.

Often the change will be for the better. But other times things it will not. Even if organizations are doing all the right things for the right reasons, some things get worse before they get better. This happens because, very frequently, the links between specific actions and outcomes get lost in the detail of what happens (Stacey, 1992). Other times, it happens because the notion of what should be changed is altered as the change unfolds, unraveling a different course of action than initially anticipated (Fullan, 1993).

Throughout any reform, a certain amount of ambiguity, ambivalence and uncertainty is inevitable (Fullan, 2001). A difficulty for leaders becomes helping others control their natural inner experiences with change such as frustration, anxiety and fear, while also managing the unpredictable external elements that arise from new ways of doing things.

***CHALLENGE 3: Since productive educational reform usually falls somewhere between control and chaos, how does a leader negotiate this balance?***

Organizational theorists note that setting strategy far in advance is rarely a useful process (Morgan, 1997; Mintzberg, 1994; Schon, 1987). Mintzberg (1994) makes the claim that too much strategy can be damaging much like “a predetermined course in unknown waters” might be a “trip right into an iceberg” (p. 110). And even in cases where the course seems known, schools often get suddenly pulled by multiple and competing forces. Yet, schools and companies without strategies for change have also failed (Fullan, 2001; Elmore, 2000; Sarason, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1989). A recurring dilemma for leaders becomes whether to plan and devise solutions or to not plan and let problems and issues develop and resolve organically.

Louis and Miles (1990) suggest a solution within the context of reform at secondary urban schools:

*“... there is no reason to assume that the best response is to plan passively... the organization can cycle back and forth between efforts to gain normative consensus about what it might become, to plan strategies for getting there, and to carry on incremental experimentation that harnesses the creativity of all members to the change effort” (p. 193).*

Many others within the educational and business community discuss this notion of “cycling” that Louis and Miles (1990) describe.

Morgan (1997) notes that in successful companies, managers wait and “get beneath the surface of reform” (p. 376) so people and not procedures drive change. Mintzberg (1994) calls it “crafting strategy” (p. 110), Fullan (2001) calls it “slow knowing” (p. 139) and Senge (1999) calls it “the dance of change” (p. 5). Knowing that change will have many loops and turns, leaders move forward and backward slowly, “looking carefully but not too far ahead” (Fullan, 2001, p. 102).

Senge (1999) points out that historically many schools have looked forward, willing to try new initiatives. However, a smaller number of schools have looked backwards to see what limiting factors or barriers might have been or still might be present in their organization working against innovation and improvement. Within this framework of thinking, success does not hold a traditional definition defined by specific actions or outcomes. Rather, success is seen as a process and can be claimed when an organization has developed a highly effective response pattern for dealing with the changing agendas and demands that are imposed on it.

Establishing a climate of risk-taking within this framework is critical. Teachers are most productive in supportive environments with clear expectations where they have strong relationships with other staff and administration, plenty of opportunity to grow without being criticized, and a mix of laughter and praise. In contrast, within a demanding, isolated and unrewarding work experience, teachers exhibit pessimism, decline in motivation, fatalism towards one's work, preoccupation with one's own comfort on the job and a negativity towards the system – all barriers to productive change (Sergiovanni, 1999; Deal & Peterson, 1994; Fullan, 1993; Rozenholtz, 1989; Goodlad, 1984).

It also becomes critical to keep in mind that what happens at one stage of the change process strongly affects other stages. The impacts of change, both the positive and negative, as well as any intended and unintended outcomes affect the future attitude and capacity towards change for both individuals and the entire organization (Fullan, 2001). A positive experience can make an organization and its individuals

willing to try something new again. A negative experience can bring about a short or long-term reluctance to attempt anything else anytime soon.

Stacey describes the complexity that stems from the challenge of change.

*"All organizations are paradoxes. They are powerfully pulled towards stability by the forces of integration, maintenance controls, human desires for security and certainty, and adaptation to the environment on one hand. They are also powerfully pulled to the opposite extreme of unstable equilibrium by the forces of decentralization, human desires for excitement and innovation, and isolation from the environment." (Stacey, 1996, p. 349).*

If an organization gives in to stability, it stands still. If it gives in to every pull, it can never accomplish anything. Leaders, then, have the difficult job of maintaining an organization through the various loops and turns that become inevitable with change.

Establishing a climate of risk-taking in a fragile system takes an abundance of time. Staff has to trust that the innovations they suggest, whether they fail or succeed, will be used as a positive learning experience for them individually and the organization as a whole. Even for an experienced leader, the space between control and chaos can sometimes be a very challenging place within which to exist.

***CHALLENGE 4: Because substantial change involves confusion, problem situations, anxiety, difficulty and uncertainty, how does a leader deal with human emotion?***

Conflict is an integral part of change (Fullan, 1993; Marris, 1975; Peters, 1987; Schon, 1971). The more complex the reform, the more problems will surface (Fullan, 1993; Sarason, 1990; Peters, 1987; Lortie, 1975). Marris (1975) tells us all real change, whether voluntary or imposed, involves some degree of loss, anxiety and struggle. Schon (1987) notes that often the journey through change is accompanied by the task of confronting more information than one can typically handle. Frequently then,



embracing new ideas means letting go of old ideas. Because of this, when change happens on a large scale, people often fall into a cycle of grief or loss (Kubler-Ross, 1969) that we typically think of in terms of those who are experiencing tragedy or disaster.

Sometimes during times of organizational upheaval, people are asked to discard practices and procedures that were part of their daily routines for years. This becomes a kind of loss and we see certain emotional and physical behaviors characteristic of the grieving process (Kearney & Hyde, 2003; Barger & Kirby, 1997). Knowing that most change efforts will not evoke the extreme behaviors and emotions that a personal or physical tragedy will, even the smallest change frequently brings forth some degree of emotion seen in the larger cycle (Kubler-Ross, 1969).

Some typical reactions evidenced include numbness, denial, anger, bargaining and testing as workers come to grips with letting go of structures or programs. And knowing the change process in educational organizations is seldom linear, it follows that the grief process is also rarely linear so people can be seen frequently moving in and out of reactions and emotions.

A difficulty for leaders becomes allowing the time needed to help people cope with their natural emotions in the workplace without letting the organization become trapped in a negative cycle of down spiraling. When problems can be worked through, a sense of mastery and accomplishment is achieved. Fullan (1991) states people “move from the anxiety of uncertainty to the joy of mastery” (p. 32). Good change develops trust, relevance and the continued desire to get better results.

Asking difficult questions along with a willingness to genuinely explore underlying causes, no matter how uncomfortable, will ultimately become the way to improve. Goodlad (1984) visited and described schools in seven states in an effort to understand them better. He notes that when initiating meaningful reform, questions can be generated around several recurring themes:

- *School Function:* Are all parties self-conscious about what the school does? Or, are some stakeholders sidetracked with issues such as childcare or extra-curricular activities?
- *Relevance:* Are we making school-based learning meaningful? Do students have a clear sense of purpose for being in school?
- *How Teachers Teach:* What strategies do teachers use? Are teachers focusing on students? How are students conditioned by the teachers?
- *Circumstances surrounding teachers:* How have the students affected the teachers? What are the teachers' beliefs regarding students? How are teachers conditioned by the students? What are the teachers' beliefs about each other?
- *Curriculum:* What is being taught? How is it being assessed?
- *Resources:* Which resources are provided for teachers and students? Is the resource of time being used effectively?
- *Equity:* Do all students regardless of race or ethnicity have access to the same knowledge?

- *Implicit Curriculum:* Which values does our school teach? Do we encourage students to be active or passive? Do we teach them to work alone compressively or cooperatively in groups?
- *Satisfaction:* What do administrators, teachers, students and parents say about coming to school?
- *Data:* What information do we keep regarding teaching and learning? How is it used?

When these questions are considered collectively and schools develop the capacity to deal with their own problems and become largely self-renewing, school improvement efforts are evident (Goodlad, 1984). However, when systems that continually pose difficult questions without having the capacity or resources to realistically address them show a considerable discrepancy between input, what a worker will invest in a job, and output, what a worker will derive from the job.

This condition has been termed “burnout” (Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Farber, 1991) and is becoming more prevalent as we move into an era of high-stakes testing where teachers feel the pressure to do a good job increasing but the payoffs in terms of decision-making, recognition or advancement decreasing.

Burnout is commonly seen in struggling schools. Teachers repeatedly hear how poorly their students are faring. They are often asked to invest more in the way of time and effort but are frequently given less in the way of decision-making, salary, benefits and perks that more successful districts offer their staff.

People in failing schools tire from putting in what they perceive to be wasted time. Without the right skills and resources, they verbalize that nothing they are doing

seems to make a difference. While working just as hard or even harder than their more affluent peers, continued low test scores and school improvement and empowerment labels seem to sting (Orr, Byrnes, Jimenz, McFarlane, Brown, 2005).

When negative emotions become part of the workplace, work relationships are affected. Conversations become filled with hostility and irritation. Hostility breeds more hostility and any differences of opinion easily become major disagreements. People begin to look for scapegoats and often resort to rigidity, want to put in less time and exhibit less of a willingness to explore new alternatives and work together (Maslach & Leiter, 1997).

In situations where hostility continually persists, people sometimes come to believe that negative things will continually happen to them, and they have no responsibility for the outcome. Known as “victim’s mentality,” Baker and Greenberg (2006), in *What Happy Companies Know: Discovering what’s Right with America’s Corporations*, report that victimization along with entitlement, rescuing by others and blaming are critical obstacles to an organization’s overall levels of happiness and success. They note positive emotions such as appreciation, happiness and joy evolve from not necessarily having all the answers but from companies being willing to look at issues together.

When organizations use problematic situations as a springboard for finding creative solutions to complex change, deep reform is often the outcome (Fullan, 1993). For leaders, it becomes necessary to have others embrace problems but not dwell on them and celebrate their accomplishments but not ride on them. The language is so easy, but the reality is so difficult.

***CHALLENGE 5: With so many competing values, how can building-level leaders keep learning at the heart of school reform?***

All meaningful school reform must have teaching and learning at the center. (Dufour, Dufour & Eaker, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2001; Elmore, 2000; Fullan, 2000, 1999, 1993; Senge et al., 2000, 1999; Leithwood et al., 2001; Tyack and Cuban, 1995; Dufour, Dufour & Eaker, 2005). Lauren Resnick (1999) opens her “Principles of Learning” by stating that the “human capability is open-ended” (p. 4). To this end everyone is a legitimate learner. Authentic learning and teaching requires that knowledge be used for the purpose of constructing meaning. Teaching moves from imparting facts to fostering activities and assignments that help students make connections, solve problems and predict, interpret and analyze to create new understandings.

Cognitive and social scientists tell us that people will continue to learn if they are taught specific self-monitoring and self-management strategies. Termed metacognition, learners of all ages can be given specific skills that will make them effective thinkers in new situations. Strategies such as persisting, posing problems, striving for accuracy and using precise language for different types of tasks can all be demonstrated and practiced with students. To prepare children for their role as continuous learners, students can be shown how to not only hold onto information but how to act on it and apply it to future tasks (Costa & Kallick, 2000; Senge et al., 2000; Sternberg, 1997; Resnick, 1999). Sustained effort beginning with modeling, then scaffolded with additional coaching and gradually pulling the scaffolding helps children and adults master the traits they'll need for a lifetime of learning on their own (Thomlinson, 1999).

Schools are often organized around structures that work well for adults. Over the years, certain kinds of students have been categorized as “successful” because their attributes have been a good fit to the adult structures. In actuality, all children could be successful if the structures were created to fit them (Senge et al., 2000; Thomlinson, 1999; Resnick, 1999; Wiggins & McTighe, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Gardner, 1983). Known as a child-centered approach, schools can move to establishing environments where the student becomes central. A child-centered school shifts the focus in decision-making from what’s best for the school or the adults to what is best for the child. Schools that have high expectations and a strong caring culture, which embraces each child as important to the learning community, create a rich climate for learning.

Students need to feel respected and comfortable taking risks that enhance learning, accepting challenging tasks, asking questions when they are confused and persisting when they run into difficulty. Children first come to their teachers and classrooms looking for affirmation and affiliation. As their role shifts to complex learner, they seek accomplishment and autonomy—all critical needs in their development (Thomlinson, 1999).

In Howard Gardner’s words (1983), the guiding question in a child-centered school shifts from “How smart is the child?” to “How is the child smart?” Denge and Lucas (in Senge et. al., 2000, p. 124) tell us that in order for schools to be effective, we must begin a process of “demystifying the learner.” This process involves helping both adults and students value the strengths and skills they bring to the classroom and recognize and identify areas they need to develop further. When thinking about areas

for improvement, Fullan (2001) denotes that for systems really desiring to improve, all lasting growth will involve a balance between individual and collective learning as well as a balance between learning from internal sources and learning from external sources.

McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) found three patterns of teaching practices in their large scale study of school communities: 1) teachers who enact traditions of practice where traditional subject-based teaching occurs and only traditional students succeed; 2) teachers who lower expectations and standards are watered down in the face of low-motivated students and only selected students see success; and 3) teachers who are innovating and engaging and learning gains are experienced by all.

In communities with traditional teaching frameworks or lowered expectations, teachers often locate their problems in the students and keep to themselves. In contrast, teachers who are successful with many types of students can be found looking to themselves and others to seek out and learn additional strategies to use with students. These teachers often move beyond or outside established structures to initiate talk with colleagues or supervisors that ultimately improves their practice (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001).

Through his work with The Albert Shanker Institute, Richard Elmore (2002) also documented the value of collaboration as a viable means of professional development. However, Elmore notes that in most cases, the most substantial training for teachers is still occurring prior to them entering the classroom. Even with all that has been revealed to us regarding learning as an apprenticeship and a social process (Sternberg, 2001; Resnick, 1999; Thomlinson, 1999; Gardner, 1995), much teaching today and

the subsequent learning about teaching continues to be done in isolation (Elmore, 2002; Senge et al., 2000; Fullan, 1993; Goodlad, 1984; Lortie, 1975). Even worse, many teachers report that individual schools can be “hostile and inhospitable places” for their adult learning (Elmore, 2002, p. 4-5).

Teachers are more likely to embrace new ideas if the work is rewarding and if their efforts increase the quality and performance of their students’ achievement. (Dufour & Eaker, 2005, 1998; Elmore, 2002; Barth, 1990). New ideas can be acquired from colleagues and peers as well as from connections to other educational institutions, colleges and universities (Fullan, 2001; Newman & Wehlage, 1995).

Elmore (2002) tells us “practice and values change in concert” (p. 8). He also reports that few teachers willfully engage in practices they know to be ineffective and shares that many educators think they are doing the best they can. Successful leaders find ways to bring knowledge, expertise and the continuous development of best practice to their organizations and facilitate learning for students and teachers (Fullan, 2001; Newman & Wehlage, 1995).

***CHALLENGE 6: If neither top-down nor bottom-up strategies of leadership are effective, is leadership needed?***

Tony Wagner (2003) notes that as we move to have schools become “learning organizations” we must connect our means and ends. If we are looking to have a collaborative culture as an outcome, it follows that we should construct a collaborative process of change that involves new structures for leadership. While school improvement efforts rarely occur without a strong leader, they also seldom occur without



the learning, power and decision-making shared with teachers (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Walstrom, 2004; Fullan, 2001; Elmore, 2000; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Sergiovani, 1996).

Developing a culture for collaboration is important but definitely not enough unless it results in gains for students. DuFour, DuFour, Eaker & Karhanek (2004) report that many positive learning communities still have children who aren't learning in their midst. Kozol (2005) warns that the gap for minority children continues to be of endemic proportions and a recent report prepared by the RAND corporation for the Department of Education (Vernez, Karam, Mariano & DeMartini, 2006) notes that most comprehensive reform efforts in recent years have been lukewarm at best.

Various models of leadership address new roles for principals. "Instructional leadership" speaks to models which depart from the traditional managerial role to one in which the building leader focuses on improving classroom practice (Hallinger, 2000; Barth, 1991; Duke, 1987). "Shared leadership" or "distributed leadership" models (Elmore, 2000; Spillane & Halverson, 1999) promote leadership as a function and not necessarily a role. Here, leadership is seen to flow from the expertise of the group at large rather than exclusively from any one person and is used to make decisions related to improvement. The principal's role will vary with the context for decision-making and can exhibit a wide range of styles (Waters & McNulty, 2004; Fullan, 2001; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Barth, 1990; Fullan, 2001; Senge et al., 1999; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 1994).

A third model of leadership is the "adaptive model (Wallace, Engel & Mooney, 1997). This leadership style suggests that certain practices might be best when

organizations prepare for change. Within this model, the leader provides the structure for issue resolution, maintains focus on the problem solving skills of the group and keeps the equilibrium of the system in balance as change is initiated.

Maintaining a positive climate that can sustain strong results is frequently becoming more difficult to attain as students continue to come from diverse backgrounds and neighborhoods. Along with establishing a strong culture, good leaders also have the responsibility of enhancing the skills and knowledge of their people and making everyone accountable for student learning. For principals, that can sometimes means moving away from the comfort of collaboration and turning to the more isolated role of supervision (Elmore, 2000).

Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2003) in their recent report for Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) synthesized information from thirty years of research on principal behaviors into yet another model termed “balanced leadership.” Looking specifically at the principalship, this study identified twenty-one leadership responsibilities of building level leaders. A framework was created that sorts the responsibilities by focus “knowing what to do” (p. 9-10) and magnitude “how the change will impact groups or individuals” (p. 11-12). Knowing the order and magnitude that certain tasks bring to the change process can sometimes afford leaders the opportunity to choose which areas they begin to address first.

Still another model, the “person-organizational” fit model of leadership, has been found to be particularly useful in urban settings (Orr, Byrne-Jimenez, McFarlane, Brown, 2005). Using Kristoff’s (1996) work as a framework, this style of leadership focuses on individuals, not just on the job. Within this model, leaders put their focus on building a

strong culture that will encourage members to identify and contribute their talents in ways that will benefit the organization at large. Rather than defined tasks and roles, individuals can use their strengths in a flexible fashion and step out of traditional job descriptions to meet the school's needs and move the building forward.

Within the leadership field, much work has also been devoted to the attributes and dispositions that leaders bring to their roles. The work of behaviorists such as Null (1996), Hare (1993) and Gregoric (1982) tell us that certain traits may lend themselves to choosing certain operating behaviors. For example on the Gregoric (1982) matrix, some leaders are found to be concrete and sequential while others are found to be abstract and random. On the Hare (1993) matrix, leaders can be defined within combinations of dynamic, aggressive, supportive or creative behaviors. Leadership has also been characterized using an abundance of metaphors. Principals have been described as artists, commissars, architects, designers, stewards and teachers (Hughes, 1994).

Sergiovani (1992, 1996, 1999) with his extensive work on leadership, suggests that leadership is not just about what one does but also about what one believes. In "Leadership for the Schoolhouse," Sergiovanni (1996) states that leaders who will ultimately bring a social and moral benefit to their schools "see a connection between what they do and a larger purpose" (p. 33). Calling this "leadership by purposing" (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 129) or "transformational leadership" (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000, p. 129), Leaders in this model move beyond performance and productivity to help teachers and themselves find sense and meaning in their work.

Principals can weave reflection, personal vision and internal values systems together to create strategies or behaviors for dealing with various situations that arise. Operating from “an ethic of caring” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 139), the transformational model is particularly engaged in developing “mindscapes” (Sergiovanni, 1996, p. 157) that encourage all stakeholders to adopt a shared set of values which defines the organization’s operational behaviors. With so many models claiming success, leaders have obvious challenges in knowing what behaviors to embrace. Particularly in struggling environments, which hold so many needs, each model seems to call out for consideration.

### **A New Leader for Change**

In September of 2003, I entered Jefferson School as the new building principal. A review of the literature on leading during reform clearly outlined for me many of the challenges that present to building level leaders during times of change. As a leader, there were many ideas to consider. As a researcher, I hoped to continue to explore these ideas in a way that would deepen my understanding of this issue, particularly as it applied to my new practice.

## CHAPTER 2: INTENT OF THE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

As reform efforts within struggling schools are initiated, there are many challenges for leaders that accompany the changes. I have chosen to use narrative inquiry as the methodology to explore the complexity of these changes.

Narrative inquiry stems from an assumption that all human experience is individually and socially storied in some form (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). People lead storied lives and then construct and reconstruct stories to tell about and interpret those lives. I would like to use the power of stories of change as I experience them to document and learn more about the complex nature of school reform.

John Dewey first introduced the value of story to the educational arena in 1934. Dewey (1934) believed that human experience is lived and interpreted narratively so the study of the stories of education is the study of the experience. Following Dewey's lead, others have used and supported narrative ways of knowing within school settings.

*Narrative is the explication of human intention in the context of action (Bruner, 1984, p.4).*

*The narrative process "seeks to collect data to describe lives" (Marshall and Rossman, 1995, p.86).*

*Teacher's knowledge is event structured and stories provide access to the knowledge. Stories capture complexity, interconnectedness, and the richness and nuances of meaning (Carter, 1993, p.5).*

*This experience of knowing school situations is one in which personal practical knowledge composed of such experiential matters as images, rituals, habits, cycles, routines and rhythms is brought to bear (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 195).*

By offering rich descriptions of the daily encounters and interactions of those within educational settings, narrative researchers have been able to bring forth a rich and in-depth body of knowledge about teaching and learning. Along with teaching and learning, leadership is also a human experience. Following Dewey's thinking, the study of the stories of leadership becomes the study of the experience of leading.

In order that I might contribute to a conversation on the challenges of leadership introduced in Chapter 1, I will record, tell and study the stories of my leadership experience at Jefferson School. I hope to use this narrative account and process to expand and deepen the understandings of the challenges related to leading during change.

### **Statement of Intent**

As we enter an era of accountability and reform, change efforts are on the increase (Dufour and Eaker, 2004, 1998; Fullan, 2001, 1993; Elmore, 2000; Goodlad, 1984). Leaders within reform efforts are frequently asked to achieve quick results, and at the same time, meet the needs of people by maintaining a positive climate for learning and working. These competing goals sometimes create complex challenges for leaders.

For this research project, I will gather data that represents specific moments of change for Jefferson School as well as for key individuals within the system. I will then use the data to craft descriptive narratives that illustrate some of the conflicts, struggles and dilemmas that arise during a change in leadership. Finally, by applying the

research on leadership and reform to the stories, I will interpret the narratives to reflect on the implications of the challenges for leaders.

### **Guiding Research Questions**

In presenting my narrative study, I will address the following research questions:

- 1) What do the dichotomies and paradoxes of change look like within a particular school organization?
- 2) How can a building-level leader create successful avenues for reform within a culture that is resistant to change?
- 3) During times of re-culturing, what challenges do leaders face when working with individuals?

### **Purpose of the Study**

Crites (1971) notes that a strong narrative holds an “invitation” (p. 8) for others to look where you have been and see what you’ve seen. Moving away from “truths” (p. 8) and looking at issues from the unique lens of a participant can afford that new meanings and understandings be brought to complicated and complex phenomena.

By helping the reader relive significant parts of the Jefferson School story, I hope to illuminate the struggles and challenges that a building principal experiences while the change process unfolds. Then, through the use of the narrative process, I will take a deeper look into the influence that a building leader might hold during a time of change and what the effects of that influence might mean for individual people working with the leader.

Clannidin and Connelly (2000) note that historically the outcome of formalist inquiry has been to contribute to the “development of a theoretical framework or to replicate and apply a theory at hand” (p. 42). In contrast, the contribution of narrative inquiry is to “create a new sense of meaning and significance to a studied topic” (p. 42). A narrative inquirer does not prescribe generalities but rather creates a text that contains a “vicarious testing of life’s possibilities” (p. 42). I hope that my account of leadership offers readers a place where they can live through my experiences and then begin to imagine and apply their own understandings and applications of the stories of leading.

## **Methodology and Procedures**

Within this study, narrative refers to both the process and the product. Although we usually think about writing as a way of “telling” about the world, writing is also a way of “knowing” more about it – a method of discovery and analysis (Richardson, 1994). From writing in different ways, one can discover new aspects of a topic and our relationships to it.

The data related to school reform that I see beginning to appear at Jefferson School is not purely empirical. Along with test scores and attendance figures, there are actions, reactions, gestures, and conversations that also depict the reform effort. This source of data is too rich to ignore, and from my view as a leader and researcher, often as important for me to deal with as the empirical data.

As I begin to think about my research, I am looking to use a narrative study as a way to gather and analyze the emerging data. Historically, writing has been divided into



two genres – literary and scientific. Narrative inquiry has been a way to fuse the two genres. By bringing together the expertise of the researcher with the art of the author, data that depicts human experience can be described and studied (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Richardson, 2000). When thinking about the data related to leadership that I want to capture and synthesize, narrative seems an appropriate match.

Although there are traces of narrative inquiry from as early as the eighteenth century, narrative as a method of analysis is thought to have taken hold during the twentieth century with the Russian formalists' study of fairy tales and Levis Strauss's analysis of myths (Manning & Cullum-Swan, 1994). In the mid 1970's, Bruner's work in the social sciences brought narrative methods to the research arena. He encouraged researchers to move from a "traditional positivistic stance to a more useful interpretive posture" (p.8). Encouraging the use of precise language to capture the reality of the experience and interpretive language to express the understandings of those experiences, researchers began to create written accounts of the events and phenomena that they observed.

In recent times, many including Clannidin and Connelly (2000), Lightfoot and Davis (1997), McEwan and Egan (1995), Richardson (1994), Cortazzi (1993), Piantinida (1982) and Marble (1977) have used narrative portrayals in their study of educational issues. These stories have been able to capture outward descriptions of the environment of classrooms and schools but perhaps, just as importantly, capture the internal feelings, reactions, hopes and values of teachers, students and administrators. Cortazzi (1993) notes that narrative methods of research can develop accounts that preserve the voice of those within the schools. "We need to know how teachers see

themselves, see their situation, what their experience is like, what they believe, how they think” (p. 12).

Elliot Eisner (1984) termed this thinking “aesthetic ways of knowing” (p. 29) and brought to mind that knowing means understanding the nuances and subtleties underlying experience in addition to observing the more visible outward elements. While paradigmatic modes of thinking use logic, mathematics and science, narrative modes of thinking use stories, gripping drama and believable historical accounts (Bruner, 1984, p. 97). A skilled narrative frequently does not present in a linear order and often contains such conventions as flashback, soliloquies, metaphors and other literary devices to engage the reader (Bruner, 1984, p. 99-100). As important as the events that it describes, the success of a narrative lies in the skill of the storyteller who is crafting the story.

When thinking about which parts of the story to tell and with which words, there are many decisions for the writer. Whose stories get told? Which parts of the stories should be included? Which parts should be omitted? How much of the narrator’s voice should be used? Bruner (1984) notes that the test for a strong narrative lies not in its claim at truth but rather its believability. “Narrative accounts can be lifelike and exhibit verisimilitude even when they contain certain falsehoods (p. 99).

Polkinghorne (1988) notes that the search for a universal plot leads the researcher to choose words to describe experiences according to the meanings to which they contribute. In this particular study, I will choose words that portray some of the most significant struggles of leadership as seen by me. In doing so, I will use the

narrative process to apply cognitive reflection and understanding to the stories to learn more about the challenges of leading.

Plato, within the hierarchies of knowledge noted that often the most secure knowledge comes not from empirical observation (as in a bent rod within a glass of water) but rather in the rational application of meaning. In a similar way then, I will explore the abstract concept of school leadership through an interpretive rather than positivistic stance. My choice of words and stories will be deliberate and purposeful with the intention being to craft stories that depict times of change. I will choose words that describe the struggles and conflicts I experience. Using, thick description, dialogue, and additional literary devices, I will create portrayals of moments that I experience with others during the change effort.

The narrative product within my study will hold an organization obtained from the field of literature. A typical narrative contains the following elements:

- Orientation – the setting and the characters
- Abstract – a summary of the incidents or events
- Complicating action – an evaluative commentary on events, conflicts and themes
- Resolution – the outcomes (Mishler, 1986, p 236-237).

When authors encode their texts with these common elements, they add layers of description to clarify content or enhance listener interest. I hope to craft stories that contain valuable content related to leadership and exhibit a writer's style that engages the reader in the topic. By portraying the stories with these commonalities, I will offer up my observations of some of the challenges related to reform.

In order to represent the challenges of change at Jefferson School, I will utilize a narrative study with several distinct components, involving an interpretive naturalistic approach to the subject matter. I will organize the study into three chapters, each with its own purpose but yet linking all three narratively through the words and content. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) note that all experience is multidimensional and in order to thoroughly research an experience, one must explore each dimension. This requires a need to be deliberate in exploring inward conditions such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions as well as documenting the existential outward conditions seen in the environment. Events have not only a present but also a past and a future space- all that need to be considered. Each chapter will have its own time in space and look at the school from several dimensions.

### **Context (Chapter 3)**

I will open my narrative study with a description of the **context**. Looking at the history of Jefferson School prior to my coming, Chapter 3 will address the following questions: What significant events marked the history of the district and the history of Jefferson School? How was Jefferson School perceived prior to my arrival? What was the climate of the building like? What was student achievement like? What reform efforts had previously been attempted and how had they been received?

In order to gather the data for this chapter, I will keep a personal handwritten reflective journal. I will date and enter data that relates to the context prior to my arrival at Jefferson School. I will specifically record anecdotes that describe the climate of the

school prior to my arrival. I will use the data in crafting the portrayal of the school's history. Additional data for this narrative will be gathered from:

- Newspaper accounts
- Books
- Publications
- District documents

By exploring Jefferson School's history, I will look at avenues that were open for reform as well as barriers working against reform. Gertz (1983) notes that as researchers, stories don't simply start when we enter the field. Lives began before we arrived and will continue after we leave. "The school and the community, the landscape in the broadest sense, have their own histories" (Clannidin and Connelly, 1984, p. 67). Describing and interpreting the history of Jefferson School will be an important step in understanding the challenges of change as they presented to me as a new leader.

### **Key Moments of Change (Chapter 4)**

This section will address **key moments of change** as they are experienced by various stakeholders in the organization. Using storied portrayals, Chapter 4 will describe interactions I have with various adults and children at Jefferson School. I will address the following questions: What do key moments of change look like for the senior staff? New teachers? The secretary? When do some of these moments occur? What impact does change have on certain groups? Certain individuals? What are some of the most significant human experiences related to the changes? What can we learn about school change efforts if we begin to reflect on these moments?

For this section, I will keep an electronic journal where I will date and enter my observations and thoughts about the change process. I will make an entry at least three times a week and will record data that relates to the challenges of change in dealing with reform. I will specifically record anecdotes that tell the stories of the key people within the organization and what change was like for them as they related to me.

Denzin (1994) suggests organizing histories around “epiphanies” – important life shaping events – using a framework called “interpretive interactionism” (p. 510). This style begins and ends with the researcher and encourages personalized stories that are thickly contextualized and connected to larger institutional, group and cultural contexts. I will use the data from the journal entries to craft storied portrayals that describe some of the “epiphanies” that occur during my three-year period at Jefferson Elementary School. At the end of each section, I will interpret the stories along with research from the field. I hope these stories will provide an avenue for discourse regarding leadership and some of the larger epistemological questions regarding reform and schooling.

- *Where do the needs of people fit into school restructuring efforts?*
- *How can we facilitate the “slow knowing” of authentic learning and still meet the urgency of accountability?*

For this section I will apply the elements of personal narrative to the stories. In this way, I will try to capture both the events of change as well as the feelings, attitudes and emotions I experience in working with individuals. I hope that these portrayals will give the reader a glimpse into what the challenges of change look like in an authentic setting.

### **The Context Changed (Chapter 5):**

I will follow the individual stories with a narrative that describes Jefferson School at the end of my three-year period. Chapter 5 will address the following: What is the climate now like? What is student achievement like? What policies and practices changed? What things remained the same?

For this portrayal, I will use data other than the journal notes. Using the sources described below, I will create an account of the school at the end of the three-year period. The purpose of this narrative will be to describe the changed context in contrast to the one I describe at the start of the effort.

I will use documents such as:

- Reports
- Surveys
- Emails
- District publications
- Meeting minutes

### **Data Collection**

Meriam (1997) tells us that within the field of qualitative research the researcher is primarily responsible for data collection with the emphasis then being on using the data to interpret how others and ultimately one's own self derive meaning and make sense of the structures, events and experiences within their world. Garman and Piantanida (1999) note that qualitative research follows three stages: recollection, introspection and conceptualization. In the recollection stage, the events are committed

to record. It is during this stage that I will gather the data related to change. During introspection the researcher resonates with the elements of the study. It is during this stage that I will craft the narratives that portray the challenges of change. And finally, during conceptualization, the elements are re-storied to enable the researcher to construct meaning of the experience within its context. It is during this stage that I will apply the research to expand the understandings related to the challenges of leadership (Garman & Piantanida, 1999).

Throughout the three-year period at Jefferson School, I will collect data on the change process using multiple sources of evidence. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) share that during any study narrative inquirers “make themselves aware of the many, layered narratives at work in their inquiry space. They imagine narrative intersections, and they anticipate possible narrative threads emerging (p. 70). Throughout my study, I will be reflective in order to recognize and gather data that emerges around narrative lines of change. As the study progresses, I will work to be cognizant of the emerging narratives and those which I might like to restory.

### **Positioning Self in Study**

Ellis and Bochner (2000) report that many studies have evolved since the 1970's which explore topics with a personal connection. Studies that arise from a researcher's own questions have held labels such as “personal narrative research,” “critical autobiography,” “ethnographic biography” and “lived experience.” With many research studies still emerging, the lines between genres are somewhat blurred. Yet, regardless of the label, all of these studies have the commonality of the researcher being centered



within the study. Douglas and Moustakas (1984) note that “the aim of research with a personal point of view has been to make contact with and respect a researcher’s own questions and problems and to suggest a process that affirms imagination, intuition, self-reflection and the tacit dimension as valid ways in the search for knowledge and understanding” (p.40).

The questions related to the challenges of change at Jefferson School arise from my personal experience of leading so that’s where I feel best able to enter the study. Yet, I understand that many within the research community continue to be wary of research related to self-observation. (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Research is not simply telling one’s own stories or portraying one person’s point of view. By immersing my topic in the literature and holding events up to what others have already learned about reform, I hope to present an account that is scholarly and rigorous and worthy to contribute to the discourse on school reform.

Richardson (2000) notes that from a postmodern view, having a partial, local or historical knowledge constitutes a form of knowing. From my partial view as the leader, I will share vivid accounts of the challenges surrounding change and the implications those challenges held for me as a leader. Ellis (1991), a strong advocate of autobiographical inquiry has argued that an individual is best situated to describe his or her own experience more accurately than anyone else. “Who would make a better subject than a researcher consumed by wanting to figure it all out?” (p. 30).

Still, Clannidin and Connolley (2000) caution that how we are personally storied ultimately drives how we see and then subsequently write as a narrator and researcher. My lens as a researcher is certainly colored from my life’s experiences. I’ve spent over

forty years as a principal, teacher, mother and student. The stories I lived and the stories I tell from those experiences certainly impact the stories I am now able to create. We are always present in our stories and that is certainly something to be mindful of when hearing mine.

I will apply the following guidelines for quality in autobiographical forms of self-study in research to my work:

- Autobiographical self-studies should ring true and enable connection.
- Self-studies should promote insight and interpretation
- Autobiographical self-study research must engage in history forthrightly and the author must take an honest stand.
- Authentic voice is necessary but not sufficient condition for the scholarly standing of biographical self-study.
- The autobiographical self-study researcher has an ineluctable obligation to seek to improve the learning situation not only for self but for the other.
- Powerful autobiographical self-studies portray character development and include dramatic action: Something genuine is at stake in the story.
- Quality autobiographical self-studies attend to persons in context or setting.
- Quality autobiographical self-studies offer fresh perspectives on established truths.
- To be scholarship, edited conversation or correspondence must not only have coherence and structure, but that coherence and structure should provide argumentation and convincing evidence.

- Interpretation made of self-study data should not only reveal but interrogate the relationships, contradictions, and limits of the views presented. (Patton, 2002, p. 571)

### **Logic of Justification**

Because narrative inquiry is formed from unique epistemological assumptions, the traditional criteria of validity, reliability and generalizability seen in traditional research would not be appropriate. Richardson (2000) states that in judging narratives, we should seek to meet the literary criteria of coherence, verisimilitude, and interest (p.11). Bochner (2001) notes, "Think of life being expressed not merely as data to be analyzed and categorized but as a story to be respected and engaged" (p. 132).

Clannidin and Connelly choose "wakefulness" over the language of "criticism." They define wakefulness as a conversation which allows us to proceed forward with a "constant, alert awareness of risks, of narcissism, of solipsism, and of simplistic plots, scenarios and unidimensional characters" (p. 184). It is with a spirit of "wakefulness" that I will craft my stories of change. Grumet shares "Our stories are the masks through which we can be seen, and with every telling we stop the flood and swirl of thought so someone can get a glimpse of us." I hope to provide narratives that offer an engaging glimpse into the complex nature of leading during reform.

### **Narrative Voice**

For this study, the portrayal of my leadership experience will be told solely from my voice, as the principal at Jefferson School. Because the study is a look into

leadership, I am choosing to present a narrative that describes the challenges from a unique personal lens. Denzin (1994) notes, "When a writer writes a biography, he or she writes himself or herself into the life of the subject written about. When the reader reads a biographical text, that text is read through the life of the reader. Hence, readers and writers conspire to create the lives they read and write about." (p.26).

While I collaborate with staff on virtually every aspect of operations at Jefferson School and frequently ask people what they are thinking, I am choosing not to interview or engage staff in my project. The emotions at Jefferson School are very fragile. I do not want to risk creating any anxiety, or worse yet, resentment that some people might be interviewed and storied over others. And because I am in the tenuous position of being the direct supervisor of staff, I don't want to appear as if I might be applying any pressure, direct or implied, to staff members to participate in a research project.

In making this decision, I also believe, that I am in no way, compromising my study. Since the purpose of this study is a look at leadership, the stories of others interacting with me is only one piece of data. While being a leader can't occur without others, it is primarily the story of my personal challenges and defining moments that will be portrayed and interpreted. Therefore, the information I generate reflectively through personal journaling supported with authentic documents gathered during the period of change will provide comprehensive data to capture the essence of the leadership experience for me.

That said, the identity of the individuals involved in the reform effort will not contribute to the concepts being studied. What will be important are rich descriptions of people's behaviors, attitudes and emotions along with the subsequent challenges I face

in working with them. In crafting the narratives, I will fictionalize the names of all the characters within my portrayals. I will also fictionalize the name of the district and the schools within the district. It is the stories and not the specifics that capture the nature of the reform effort.

I will meet regularly with my research advisor to review the portrayals. As she also has a role in the district, I will draw upon her expertise and ask her to help scrutinize the stories I am using to illustrate the leadership experience. Guba and Lincoln (1985) call this “peer debriefing” and define it as exposing oneself to a professional peer to “keep the inquirer honest, assist in developing working hypotheses, develop and test the emerging design and to obtain emotional catharsis” (p. 13).

I will make every effort to portray my stories with care and compassion and reflect the lives as authentically as I can. The purpose of this narrative inquiry is not for evaluative judgment but rather to enrich the thinking and discourse within the educational community by portraying systematic and reflective documentation of one particular instance of change within one particular educational institution from the interpretive lens of one practitioner/researcher. That said and knowing that a narrative has a life “beyond the end,” my story may continue to grow and evoke new meanings each time a different reader interacts with the text or me. Denzin (1998) reveals that no text is ever complete. “There is no clear window into the life of a person, for any window is always filtered through the glass of language, signs, and the process of signification” (p.26). Human life is filled with narrative fragments. I will collect and compile those that belong to me in the hopes of bringing deeper meaning to the challenge of leading.

## **Interpreting the Results (Chapter 6)**

Smith (1991) notes that the integration of historical, sociological, psychological and cultural perspectives to describe the lives of others allows for a hermeneutical circle or “circle of meaning” (p. 187) which locates human existence in situated action. To the interpretive researcher, the purpose of research is to advance knowledge by describing and interpreting phenomena within one’s own world in an attempt to share meaning with others.

As a researcher explores and shares his/her own story using language and conversation, meanings and understandings evolve. Not only can narrative as a phenomenon benefit its audience, narrative as a process can become a powerful tool for those who hold a practitioner/researcher role. In living out their own researcher/teacher lives and sharing their perceptions with others, practitioners can acquire new “lenses” to use in assessing their own practice (Bassey, 1999; Meriam, 1997; Connelly & Clandinin, 1991). As Parlett and Hamilton (1997) explain, narrative inquiry “documents what it is like to be participating...and seeks to address and illuminate a complex array of questions...” (p. 10).

As a researcher becomes an instrument of inquiry, the frame of references from within one’s own life experiences contextualize the experience portrayed (Garman & Piantanida, 1999). Using reflective narrative and an autobiographical voice, Chapter 6 will share some of my own epiphanies as the principal and school leader at Jefferson Elementary. I will link the ideas to the research presented in the field related to the

challenges of change. I hope to reflect on the impact the role had on me, especially after having experiences as a leader in a successful school.

### **Addressing the Literature**

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) share that interpretive research often best addresses the literature as “a kind of conversation between theory and life or, at least, between theory and the stories of life contained in the inquiry (p. 41). Rather than literature being used as a structuring framework, literature within the narrative mode is seen as a way to bring deeper understandings to the topic being studied.

As I begin to think about the challenges of change, several strands of literature around various recurring themes seem to be most helpful. The work of Fullan (1999, 1993), Stacey (1992), Pascale (1990) and Marris (1975) is beginning to deepen my understanding that the process of change is complex and unpredictable and needs as much attention as the elements of change. Collins (2001) and Peters (1987) are furthering my thinking with their descriptions of how organizations move from chaos to control by empowering the right people and using information gathered from all levels of the system effectively. Beginning to recognize that change is not simply just an organizational phenomenon, I am exploring the literature on the emotions and struggles of real people (Fullan, 2000, 1993; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Farber, 1991; Marris, 1975).

The work of Elmore (2000), Goodlad (1984) and Lortie (1975) is helping to define the context of schooling for me and raising the issue that in many systems, simply because of the structure of public schools, some degree of isolation exists. Then,

particularly in contexts where school reform efforts have been unsuccessful, negativity, victimization and other self defeating expressions of emotion have become the primary culture (Baker & Greenberg, 2006; Farber, 1991; Maslach & Leiter, 1991; Kubler-Ross, 1969) and much work is needed to establish or restore a culture to the positive state.

Moving beyond the negativity and creating a climate of collaboration and hope can be extremely challenging. Building a culture for learning and working together has been vastly explored in the research. I am turning to the work of Elmore (2000), Leithwood and Jantzi (2000), Senge et. al. (1999), Spillane (1999), Dufour and Eaker (1998) and Sykes (1996). They view collaboration as a means whereby people can maintain their diverse views but still find a way to incorporate them into group goals and processes. I am also looking into what is known about the socialization of schools and how it impacts the development of both new and inexperienced teachers (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Rosenholtz, 1989).

The literature on learning is particularly helpful as I begin to think about reform (Resnick, 1999; Thomlinson, 1999; Gardner, 1995). Thinking about connecting effective teaching practices to what is known about authentic learning will be important for both student and adult learning (Wiggins & McTigue, 1998; Danielson, 1996). I am also exploring what has been written about student-centered schools that build a systems-wide climate for learning (Saphier, 2005; Senge, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1996). And finally, the Jefferson story can not make sense without a look into urban education and urban leadership (Kozol, 2005; Cooter, 2004; Crosby, 1999; Payne, 1998; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).



As I begin to craft the narratives of change, I will link the ideas found in my study to the work of these writers and researchers. As I bring together my observations of change with the work of those within the field, I hope to deepen the understandings of leading during change.

## **CHAPTER 3: CONTEXT OF THE STUDY THE HISTORY OF JEFFERSON SCHOOL**

### **The Context of Change**

The Fairfield community and its public school system present a unique context for school reform. Few communities and school districts within the region or perhaps even within the state have been challenged by the rare unfolding of events and circumstances this small town has lived through. Fairfield's embattled history and its subsequent politics continue to impact public schools even today. As the new leader at Jefferson School, I quickly came to see that I would need to carry with me an understanding of the district's tarnished past. Because even the slightest reminder of those days gone by could still serve to quickly pull up a cadre of emotions.

### **A Shining School in Better Days**

In the book "No Wind for Their Sails: The Betrayal of America's Urban Youth," Thomas and Stankowski (2002) characterize Fairfield in the year 2000 as a "faded suburb on the eastern fringes of Pittsburgh." Grace Kirkpatrick Alexander (1999) describes a different Fairfield in the memoir "520 Remembered":

*We lived on the fringe of a mini business area, with a drugstore across the street, a ma and pa grocery store, a shoemaker and a garage in the neighborhood. We had to walk under the main line of the railroad to get to the true Upstreet. It was dirty and gritty so we hurried through that area. Up on Penn Avenue on our way to the junior high school was a dress shop where my mother helped me choose my first "evening dress" in my life. It was two tone satin-changing to pink, absolutely fairytale beautiful. Farther uptown was the Packard Car Company where our father bought his stately sedans... The Penn-Lincoln Hotel was built sometime during our childhood. Our mother attended Women's Club meetings there and often called upon us to be servers at teas... Upstreet, after one came to Wood Street near Rebecca, there was a florist, run by Mr. Stevens, a little shoe store and other stores that seemed unimportant until one came to the Regal Theatre. On the next corner was Sherman's Bakery. Way up near Penn Avenue there was a dry-goods store. Everything from ribbons to great bolts of fabric was piled high to the rafters... One of the places we visited the most was the five and dime. There were two—Murphy's and Woolworth's... (Gressle, Cianco & Alexander, 1999, p. 95-99).*

Her version tells of a community that through the 1950's enjoyed the reputation of being a shining upscale residential neighborhood for professionals working in the city of Pittsburgh or those who were employed at a nearby research facility. Homes were well built and cared for. Streets were cobblestone and tree-lined. Schools in Fairfield had a stellar reputation. Students graduated with high achievement scores and went on to become "doctors, artists, engineers and CEOs of major corporations." Residents were predominately staunch Republicans and descendents of European immigrants (Gressle, Ciancio & Alexander, 1999).

A chapter devoted to the school during those years provides a glimpse at its earlier days:

*(Jefferson School) was a magnificent edifice in my childhood eyes. It was three stories high, gray stoned and large windowed. Three floors took care of elementary education. An atrium in the middle of the building made it possible to look up to the third floor where august fifth- and sixth-graders had their classrooms. Beautifully polished railings of lightwood surrounded the second and third floors at the edge of the open space. ...Of all six years at Jefferson School, one teacher left an everlasting impression on me, Miss Long who read us poetry. I can still see her walking out of the cloakroom as she recited, "Build thee more stately mansions, oh my soul, as the swift seasons roll...(James Jefferson) for who the school was named, was not a teacher himself but a school examiner and president of the Fairfield Township School Board...according to records describing his work, he accomplished many of his educational goals...he succeeded primarily because of his common sense, his accessibility, and his unpretentious nature... and so it was indeed appropriate that a school was named after him..." (Gressle, Ciancio & Alexander, 1999, p. 85-93).*

## **Urban Renewal and "The White Flight"**

Like many small towns surrounding Pittsburgh, Fairfield saw its first major shift to troubled times in the 1960's when urban renewal efforts pushed African American citizens from within the city of Pittsburgh towards communities like Fairfield. As the percentages of African American residents rose in Fairfield and racial unrest became a nationwide issue, the urban community experienced its first period of turbulence and migration (Thomas and Stankowski, 2002).

Times were changing, and a new Jefferson School was built to accommodate the notion of the “open classroom” and to keep the outside turmoil within the community from coming into the school (Gressle, Ciano & Alexander, 1999).

*On one of our trips to Pittsburgh a new (Jefferson School) had replaced the old building. It was still named (Jefferson School)) ...however, it was a modern, one story building, in the round...it stands today as a prison-like structure somewhere near the original site but with much landscaped land. It has few windows and surely relies on air conditioning... (Gressle, Ciano & Alexander, 1999, p. 93).*

Through the 1970's and 1980's, Fairfield continued to experience a steady withdrawal of its white community members and an increase in the African American members. Professional white residents, concerned with the growing unrest, migrated to surrounding communities leaving the area with steadily shrinking resources (Thomas & Stankowski, 2002).

### **A Community Stressed**

Then in the 1990's, Fairfield, along with many other Western Pennsylvania communities witnessed the collapse of the surrounding steel industry. At this time, even the many African American working-class taxpayers who now inhabited the town had no income with which to support the borough. Fairfield quickly began to show major signs of stress. Homes that had still managed to appear grand and stately were subdivided into multiple family dwellings. Bakeries, hardware stores and clothing stores were closed as poverty levels increased, and residents could not support their businesses. The walls of abandoned store fronts were boarded up and sprayed on with gang graffiti, and new businesses opened to support these troubling times – check-cashing establishments, pawn shops, tattoo parlors, rent to own businesses, wig salons and gun shops (Thomas & Stankowski, 2002).

By the 1990's gang activity, drug trafficking and random violence surfaced as an answer to the poverty that fell on many Fairfield residents. Eventually, the effects of this lifestyle began to filter down to the children. In 1992, police records show that juvenile crime in the district averaged 22.7 offenses monthly. The changes in the community could also be seen in the schools. Three out of four children now entered school from homes with poverty. There was increasing violence at school. Security was hired, and metal detectors were installed in the school doorways. Most white students transferred to private schools and the public schools became largely African American institutions (Thomas & Stankowski, 2002).

### **A School District Stressed**

In addition, positive relations between the school and community began to break down. Teachers, who were among the lowest paid in the county, were fighting for salary increases. A prolonged 52-day strike in the 1980's set the stage for negativity and a prevailing lack of respect for the teachers among community members. Then in 1990, "selective strikes" called by the Fairfield Education Association served to further anger the community. This now illegal type of work stoppage would be determined at random one day at a time. Families, many who were working several low-paying jobs simply to make ends meet, would need to watch the late news to see whether their children had school or not the following day and try to make last minute arrangements for them. Many parents felt that the children were caught in the middle of an unnecessary battle between teachers and the district (Thomas & Stankowski, 2002).

By 1992, even though 25 percent of all Fairfield children had enrolled in private schools, residents were still paying the highest school taxes in Allegheny County. This was largely due to the outcome of the strikes, which provided a 21 percent increase in salary for teachers and also because of a change in funding for special education students, many who were going outside the district for services. Financially stressed residents became frustrated and hung homemade signs that read “High Tax Zone” on telephone poles and in businesses (Thomas & Stankowski, 2002).

Not only were finances being questioned by the community, but the educational program was also under attack. A sampling of the district's statistics in the early nineties was alarming.

- At Franklin Elementary, in 1993, 72.1 percent of all sixth graders scored below the norm on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills in reading, and 67 percent scored below the norm in math.
- The high school, which had graduated 225 students in 1978, graduated 60 in 1990.
- Of the 40 students who took the SAT in 1992, the average combined verbal and math was 690, and only one student scored above the nation's average of 950.
- During the first nine-week grading period of the 1992 school year, nearly 45 percent of the high school teachers failed 20 percent or more of their students.
- Board members and parents reported visiting the schools and seeing classes with five or six students sitting in them because the daily absence rate was 28% (Thomas & Stankowski, 2002, p. 14-15).

## **The Privatization of Franklin Elementary**

Worried that the school district was not meeting the needs of its students, on January 24, 1994, the Fairfield School Board voted 7-2 to privatize Franklin Elementary making it the first public school in the United States to be operated by a private company. After receiving numerous bids, the board decided on a contract with Alternative Public Schools (APS) from Nashville, Tennessee, to help run the school. The company promised that for \$5,400 a child, as opposed to the \$8,000 the district was then spending, they would provide before and after school programs, organize individual learning plans and improve student achievement. After months of negotiating with the Fairfield Education Association (FEA) who refused to allow members to work under the plan, fifteen teachers were laid off and nine were assigned to other schools (*Pittsburgh Post Gazette*; Monday, June 29, 1998). All new teachers were hired for Franklin School, and Jefferson School received many of the teachers who were reassigned.

The privatization of Franklin opened up a national debate with teachers at the center. APS named the teachers and their union as a major obstacle to a quality education. The United Steelworkers, the Allegheny County Central Labor Council and the National Education Association, outraged by the allegation, provided thousands of dollars and organized manpower to mobilize a grass roots effort to counter the attack (*People's Weekly World*; January 17, 1998).

## **A Fierce Political Battle**

A group of residents and teachers formed to create the Franklin Residents Against Profiteering (FRAP) and began a door-to-door effort to unseat board members who voted for the privatization plan. The first day of school in 1994 marked a division in the community as supporters of FRAP and the teacher's union protested outside Franklin Elementary with signs that said "Keep Franklin Public" and "No Scabs." The Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA) filed suit on behalf of the former Franklin teachers saying that privatization was a violation of the right to a public education and bussed in member teachers from across the state to protest at the school board meeting (*People's Weekly World*; January 17, 1998).

Finally after three long years of bitter battling between the teachers and the community, the supporters of privatization were voted out of office. And in 1997, Judge R. Stanton Wettick ruled that the state code governing public schools forbids the use of tax revenues for private profit. However, a loophole was formed creating the use of public funds for "charter" schools. Franklin was returned to its public status. Its scores had not significantly improved (Thomas & Stankowski, 2000).

## **A Spotlight on Failure**

Following the settlement, the argument of public versus private education continued to litter the educational and political landscape with supporters lining up on both sides. As there continued to be *very successful* public schools and *very successful* non-public schools as well as *very unsuccessful* public and *very unsuccessful* non-public schools, the issue was not about to find a resolution. However, throughout all the



ongoing dialogue, the media spotlight continued to shine on Franklin bringing persistent unwelcome attention to the failing status of all the Fairfield schools and the lack of effectiveness of its district teachers (*People's Weekly World*; January 17, 1998).

Then, responding to increasing public pressure to hold all schools accountable for student achievement, in May 2000, lawmakers in Pennsylvania signed The Education Empowerment Act. This legislation was designed to identify and assist struggling school districts in Pennsylvania. The Fairfield School District was named to the original empowerment list for having an ongoing history of at least 50% of its students in the below basic level of performance in reading and math as measured by the PSSA (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2004). As the Department of Education made the report readily accessible to the public, Fairfield's low achievement scores again became front page news (*Pittsburgh Business Times*; June 16, 2003).

### **Legislative Pressures to Improve**

Under the provisions of Act 16, Fairfield complied with the law and developed an Empowerment Team with members from all the required stakeholder groups. The team developed a comprehensive plan which centered on adopting the New Standards and Primary Literacy Standards developed by the Learning and Research and Development Center (LRDC) at the University of Pittsburgh. "Success for All" from Johns Hopkins was adopted for literacy and Everyday Math from the University of Chicago Math Project for math in the elementary schools. In addition, the plan designated that professional development would center on increasing student achievement. "Learning Walks" would be held in all of the district's schools, common planning time would be

scheduled and “Master” teacher leaders would be chosen to “accommodate the district’s commitment to teaching the New Standards” (*The Fairfield School District Improvement Plan*; Dec. 20, 2000; see appendix).

The improvement plan outlined specific steps for increasing student achievement along with measures that would hold teachers and students accountable. The plan also specified that there would be consequences for teachers, schools and administrators that were not performing.

*“The District shall require administrators of schools that do not meet the performance goals defined in the Performance Goals, Benchmarks and Timetables section after one year to provide a self-analysis with an improvement action plan.”*

*“The District shall conduct an assessment of schools that do not meet the performance goals defined in the Performance Goals, Benchmarks and Timetables section after two consecutive years.”*

*“The District shall take whatever action is necessary to ensure that performance goals are met”* (*The Fairfield School District Improvement Plan*, 2000 see appendix).

During this time period teachers and staff reported that the schools operated under heavy pressure to perform. Administrators and master teachers became inspectors of academic programs. Anyone not performing was seen as a liability. There were rules and procedures for everything. In 2003, at Jefferson Elementary fourteen teachers resigned for new positions saying that working conditions were unbearable. The principal left for a charter school position, frustrated and unable to successfully move the staff to improve achievement. Morale was described as being at an all-time low. A district survey indicated that only one staff member responded positively to the statement “Teachers in my school are involved in decisions that matter.” And only five agreed with “My school has good administrative leadership” (*Fairfield School District Teacher Survey*, see appendix).

## **A University Partnership**

Then in 2003, the school district entered into an agreement with the Partnership for School District Improvement (PDSI), an initiative formed by the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Urban Education. This initiative was approved by the School Board, the Empowerment Team, the superintendent, the bargaining unit and the PA Department of Education. It brought a team of Pitt employees/consultants to work on the educational reform movement. The team consisted of a director focusing on leadership, a chief academic officer focusing on instruction and several other consultants and project specialists focusing on data, business and financial systems (*Pitt Chronicle*; January 20, 2004). All of these positions were filled by people who had high levels of expertise and were previously very successful either in other school districts, government or business.

The objectives of the PSDI included:

- Raising PSSA (Pennsylvania State School Assessment) scores in reading and math for all students
- Meeting and adhering to the No Child Left Behind act performance standards
- Establishing annual goals and objectives for school administrators
- Planning and coordinating professional development/training activities for teachers
- Aligning math and literacy curriculum to state and federal standards
- Improving business, financial and student accounting systems
- Involving teachers in all aspects of school improvement efforts

This team brought in a collaborative approach to school improvement – first by forming a core Leadership Team that had members from all stakeholder groups – teachers, union officials, principals, board members, central office staff and members of the PDSI team and then by meeting with and involving administrators, teachers and staff in all critical decision-making (*Fairfield School District Fall Preview*, August 20, 2003).

### **My Entry at Jefferson School**

It was during the summer of that year that I became aware of the project from Dr. Nancy Donald and agreed to become the principal at Jefferson School. I would continue in that role for the next three years in the period spanning from 2003-06. During the 2005-06 school year, I also became the principal at Washington Elementary School. Working with an assistant principal at Jefferson Elementary and an intern principal at Washington Elementary, I was able to lead the instructional program at both schools.

When I arrived at Jefferson School in the 2003 school year, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) had been in effect for two years. This reform, passed with overwhelming bipartisan support from Congress, was designed to improve student achievement and close the achievement gaps particularly the subgroups that are defined by race, poverty or disability (US Department of Education 2004, *No Child Left Behind A Toolkit for Teachers*, p. 6). The US Department of Education had reported that despite decades of work and dedication to educational reform, the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) demonstrated that only 31

percent of fourth graders read at a proficient or passing level. While achievement among the highest-performing students remained stable, a wide gap had remained between poor and economically advantaged students as well as between white and minority students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2001, as cited in US Department of Education 2004, *NCLB A Toolkit for Teachers*, p. 6).

Each state was required under NCLB to implement a statewide accountability system covering all public school children. Assessment results were to be broken down by poverty, race, ethnicity, disability and Limited English Proficiency to ensure that no group was left behind. School districts and schools that failed to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward statewide goals would be subject to improvement, corrective action and restructuring aimed at getting them back on course to meet state and national standards (US Department of Education, 2001).

Jefferson Elementary's status under No Child Left Behind in 2002 was Warning. The school did not meet AYP criteria. In 2003, the school was put on School Improvement I status with no subgroup meeting AYP. Only 37% of the fifth grade students were proficient or advanced in math and only 38% in reading. The school again did not meet AYP criteria. The percentages were 31% for math and 34% for reading with no subgroup meeting the AYP criteria again.

Under state and federal guidelines, the school had to form a School Improvement Plan and submit it to the Department of Education for review. A yearly audit was done on the plan with representatives from the Pennsylvania Department of Education frequently visiting the school for monitoring purposes.

## **The Pennsylvania Distinguished Educators**

In September 2005, a new state initiative began to unfold to assist troubled schools. The Department of Education assigned three former school leaders to the Fairfield School District under *The Pennsylvania Distinguished Educator Initiative*. The goal of this program was to conduct a quality review on seven focus areas and then work on site for two years building capacity to achieve the desired outcomes. The targeted areas in this school reform project included:

- **Vision** – establishing a clearly articulated, data-informed, lived vision of proficiency for all students
- **Data** – assessing individual student proficiency as measured by performance on the PSSA and district attainment of Adequate Yearly Progress
- **Quality Teaching** – delivering of rigorous curriculum with reliable assessments using standards-aligned instructional materials and research proved methods
- **Quality leadership** – establishing a strong and capable leadership team that sustains focus on student achievement and implementing a standards-based system to assure teaching effectiveness
- **Artful Use of Infrastructure** – creating a strategic alignment and utilization of faculty, staff, facilities, time, fiscal resources and technology to ensure academic success for all students
- **Continuous Learning Ethic** – establishing a culture of evidence-based collaborative practice, continuous professional learning and collective professional accountability

- **Community** – building authentic partnerships with students, families, businesses, higher education institutions and community-at-large (Pennsylvania Department of Education Distinguished Educator Initiative, *Fairfield School District Quality Review Report*, 2005, see appendix).

This initiative began by training principals and coordinating the writing of a written curriculum. The “Distinguished Educators” hoped to move from what they saw as “random acts of improvement” to more focused and planned initiatives.

### **The Center for Data Driven Reform**

In 2005, the Pennsylvania Department of Education piloted the 4Sight exams from Johns Hopkins University. These formative assessments, given four times a year, mirror the questions and tested anchors on the PSSA. The assessments also came with a team of educational experts from the Center for Data Driven Reform in Education (CDDRE) who were to meet with district teachers and administrators to improve achievement.

Throughout my stay in Fairfiled, teachers often talked to me about their long, battered history with reform initiatives. Those from within had an overriding sense that people from the outside wanted to come in and “fix” them. They frequently told me they thought others somehow saw the district as “broken” and outside experts had a program or protocol they were sure would jumpstart reform.

## **A Culture of Mistrust**

When I first arrived at Jefferson School, teachers overwhelmingly blamed the children and their parents for the low academic achievement in the district. They repeatedly stated that people from the outside didn't understand how difficult the children were and couldn't possibly expect them to be held to the same standards as other teachers.

Urban school districts operating within the school reform movement, particularly now under No Child Left Behind, are dauntingly challenging environments for building-level leaders. While national, state and local sanctions push leaders to make rapid improvements to low performing schools, leadership models advocate building a culture of collaboration and slow steady growth (Elmore, 2000; DuFour & Eaker, 1999; Senge et al., 1999; Sergiovanni, 1999; Rosenholtz, 1998). As an urban principal I often struggled with this glaring mismatch. How could I possibly give people the time to accept change and get to know and trust me after years of mistrust and fear of outsiders and still meet the urgency of needed reform for students?

## **Urban Leadership Challenges**

While most professional literature implies that the principalship is similar in all school contexts, the resources, demands and dynamics within the urban setting can be very different. Many urban leaders daily face issues arising from the educational and social problems of students, the poverty conditions of the community and the number and quality of the labor pool for staffing that suburban principals face on a much more



limited scale (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000; Portin, 2000; Crosby, 1999). According to work done at the IEL, along with additional focus on areas such as school safety and trying to obtain much needed resources, principals in urban schools report that they spend more time than their colleagues protecting their schools from the demands of the outside and mediating emotions such as hopelessness and frustration that comes from years of hearing how poorly one's school is doing (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000).

The Jefferson School I inherited reflected all these challenges. The students and their families lived in high levels of poverty. The shooting gallery on the streets outside made the news nightly. Waking up to the morning news to listen and hear if a shooting would affect one of my children that day became a way of life. Ruby Payne (1998) in *Framework for Poverty* states that knowing how to fight is a matter of survival for many urban children, yet knowing how not to fight within school settings becomes equally important if they desire a future that education enables. I would quickly realize this challenge at Jefferson School. My first week in Fairfield was a three-day week, and I had eighteen out-of-school suspensions because of serious fights. I knew that something had to be done immediately with this situation because children could not learn if they weren't at school. I also knew that I wouldn't be able to be out in the classes leading instruction if I was always in the office handling fights. I thought back to my days in a rural school where it took me two years to reach eighteen suspensions.

## **A School Neglected**

I also was appalled at the conditions and resources at Jefferson School. The copy machine and computers constantly went down. Furniture was old and broken. Tiles were falling off the walls. Weeds grew everywhere. Trash littered the playgrounds and the sidewalks. One day, early on, I counted eighteen “NO” signs – “NO Dogs” “NO Trespassing” “NO Bikes” “NO Parking”.... I remember sighing sadly to myself, wondering if I would soon see a “NO Children” sign. I thought back to my teachers in the rural district who had skylights, an atrium and a themed environmental playground.

As I began to meet the staff at Jefferson School and they began to share their stories and the stories of their peers, I quickly became aware that they were very much both a product and result of their dysfunctional environment. Several told me stories of having personal issues such as alcoholism and divorce. Fairfield was the only district that would give them a fresh start. A few teachers had mental health problems and were under treatment. Most teachers had attended small or community colleges and had earned average grades and minimum Praxis scores, at best. Because there was such a low pay scale and no credit reimbursement, few teachers had Masters Degrees or additional certifications. Several teachers actually had emergency certifications and one was even released by another district for unsatisfactory teaching. Thinking back to my rural district, I remembered interviewing ten candidates with a 3.5 grade-point average or higher for a long-term substitute position. On the positive side, at Jefferson School, there were two pockets of teachers who had strong credentials. One group had 25-29 years of experience, and the other had 0-2 years of experience. During those

years, the teaching workforce at large was flooded with teacher candidates, and Fairfield was fortunate to have snagged some of the best and brightest.

### **A Distanced Staff**

Settling into the principal's office the first few months at Jefferson School, I began to see how many dysfunctional teachers had worked their way into roles that had become paper/pencil jobs and were disconnected from the children. At first, I was pleased to hear of the number of positions that were in the building devoted to tutoring, counseling and support. However, I quickly saw that lacking the skills to connect to some of the most difficult children, staff had retreated to support positions that really weren't supporting much other than mounds of self-created protocols and forms.

The Department of Defense, in a special report, recently noted that increased student connection to school decreases absenteeism, fighting, bullying and vandalism while promoting educational motivation, classroom engagement, academic performance, school attendance and completion rates (US Department of Defense, 2004, *School Connectedness: Improving Students' Lives*, p. 6). Knowing that "connectedness" would be critical if children were going to feel a part of the educational community, this would need to be another area to address.

Jonathon Kozol (2005), in his recent book *The Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America*, talks of behavioral control programs similar to those in prison systems being predominant in inner city schools. Combining those with the "robotic and culturally barren" (p. 86) methods of instruction that are responses to high-stakes testing, Kozol notes that African American children in urban

settings are not getting the equal education that the federal courts in *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruled they would. Jefferson School would need to take a hard look at the many negative practices- both academically and behaviorally that were keeping the students from achieving.

Although strong leadership is certainly needed within the urban environment for some of the neediest schools in our nation, most urban principalships are filled with new and inexperienced principals (Orr, Byrne, Jimenez, McFarlane & Brown, 2005). During the time that I was in Fairfield, I saw the elementary principalships change hands six times. Each was staffed by a first-time principal. Teachers readily shared with me that the past perception in Fairfield was that principals didn't know what they were doing therefore their leadership was not valued. Looking at it from an administrator's perspective, most teachers were probably feeling the effects of a new principal's struggle to socialize into a first time leadership role within the complexity of the urban context—certainly not an easy task. However, perhaps because of the frequency with which the building level-leadership turnover occurred, staff often felt disconnected from their leaders.

Regardless, teachers at Jefferson School did not really know how to work with an experienced collaborative building level leader. Being experienced was both a help and a hindrance for me. Coming from the outside and not up through the ranks as most of their principals had, the staff didn't know or initially trust me. That would have to be earned. But coming in with experience, I had a personal sense of who I was as a leader. This knowledge would be something I would need to draw on during what would become some very difficult times ahead.

## **A Labor Union Empowered**

The Jefferson School and Fairfield story cannot be told without some time devoted to the labor union. Perhaps, it is because there are still those within the system who were affected by the privatization. Perhaps it is because of years of failed programs. Perhaps it is because of a lack of strong leadership from any other source. Whatever the reason, the labor union in Fairfield has been able to hold a traditional management versus labor stance. My first inkling into union involvement in Fairfield came when I had to consult the teacher's contract regarding a teacher question. The length was a shocking ninety pages as compared to contracts of fifty-two that I had been working with and the forty I am working with now.

Very quickly the contract language pulled me into the world of adult-centered decision-making and out of the world of child-centered decision-making.

*Daily teaching load for elementary classroom teachers shall not exceed an average of five-and-one-half hours of pupil contact a day. The daily teaching load for all secondary teachers shall not exceed five teaching periods per day and one study period or cafeteria period per day. Teachers may leave at regular student dismissal times on Fridays, paydays and days preceding holiday vacations.*

*In cases where regular substitutes are not available, teachers who volunteer may be used as substitutes during their non-teaching periods. In the absence of volunteers, a teacher may be assigned to serve as a substitute. The volunteers and assigned teachers who perform this duty shall be paid at the rate of \$12.50.*

*In the elementary schools, when no teacher has scheduled non-teaching time, classes may be combined. In cases of combined classes, teachers will be paid at the rate of \$85.20.*

*When a parent or guardian requests the opportunity to visit a classroom, the scheduling of the visit shall be made through the school building principal with one day's notice to the teacher involved. When a parent or guardian requests a conference, the appointment will be scheduled by the building principal or the teacher. If scheduled by the principal, it will be arranged at a time to allow the teacher involved at least one working day's notice. Unscheduled conferences will not be held during instructional time, except in cases of emergency. If such as emergency arises, the principal will attend the conference and class coverage will be provided.*

*Each elementary building will recruit a sufficient number of volunteers among the professional employees to perform the lunch program supervision. Elementary teachers monitoring lunchrooms or playgrounds shall be compensated at the rate of \$16.00 per hour. Elementary teachers not on lunch duty receive an hour duty free lunch.*

*Teachers of Learning Support and Emotional Support (Part Time and Full Time) responsible for preparing IEPs for a student shall be provided with up to five school days per year release time, in addition to preparation time, to be used in the preparation of IEPs. These days may be scheduled at the teacher's discretion provided the teacher is given two days notice of the desire for release time.*

*No professional employee hereunder shall be held accountable if a child does not achieve the growth projected under the annual goals and objectives of their individual educational programs.*

*(Agreement Between the Fairfield School Board and the Fairfield Education Association September 1, 1998 through August 31, 2004)*

As I read through the pages, I wondered how teachers convinced a board that in these days of standards and accountability, they should leave early on Fridays and paydays? I thought to my own teaching career of nineteen years and remembered how I could never get the job done in eight hours let alone five and a half. I wondered how special education teachers could dictate the days that they wouldn't meet with children and then have documentation that they weren't responsible if students didn't learn. I was shocked that parents needed to give a teacher a day's notice if their child had a fight in school or a failing test and they needed to talk about it.

However, from my previous twenty-five years of work in schools and involvement with unions, I believed this document probably represented the thinking of only a few. But as time went on, I would come to learn that in the absence of strong administrative leadership, union leadership would see that this document would continue to thrive. Then, as is often the case, the thinking of a few can become the way of life for many.

### **Complex Leadership for this Complex Context**

As I stepped into the principalship at Jefferson Elementary in the fall of 2003, I knew that the context offered some familiar and some very unique challenges. I also began to believe that conventional instructional leadership would not be enough to

make a difference in this very troubled school. Although the goal setting, direction, structure and collaboration components of traditional instructional leadership (Elmore, 2000; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Danielson, 1996) that I had used in my past practice would be important to student learning, a higher level of leadership would be needed to deal with the complexity of this fractured environment. I continued to explore the work of Jantzi (1999), Deal (1995), Posner and Kouzes (1993), Sergiovanni (1992), Leithwood (1992) and others who look at the “moral” or “transformational” style of leadership.

I began to think of how some of the components of these models of leadership might unfold at Jefferson School. I very much wanted a school environment where ideals such as inspiration, intellectual stimulation, acceptance, credibility, high expectations, caring and culture building were woven into the work with academics. I also began to think about “organizational fit” models of reform (Cables & Parsons, 2001; Kristoff, 1996; Chatman, 1991) and how building capacity in an urban setting might be about thinking outside the box and empowering people in ways that may be unique to their skills and our organization. I began to again think of my “challenges of change” and how my own leadership with respect to these challenges could begin the much needed re-culturing at Jefferson School.

## CHAPTER 4: KEY MOMENTS OF CHANGE

### Introduction

This chapter houses narrative accounts of key moments of change as experienced by me, the principal of Jefferson School during the 2003-05 school years. The chapter is organized into three parts. **Part 1** holds accounts of experiences with the support staff. **Part 2** holds accounts of the experiences with teachers, and **Part 3** holds accounts of experiences with students, parents and others. The narratives were crafted using daily journal notes taken during my tenure in the Fairfield School District. My notes hold many rich entries and memorable experiences. Since it would be impossible to bring them all forward, I will present a sample of incidents that represent the challenges of change for leaders as discussed in Chapter 1. By using rich description and a variety of narrative devices, I hope to portray not only the actions of leadership but also the internal struggles and emotions that accompany the complex nature of the principalship. At the conclusion of each set of stories, I have prepared a narrative analysis that interprets the pieces and links them to the literature on reform in order to discuss the challenges, complexities and leadership implications that these examples illustrate.

Following is a table which houses the names of the key people who appear in the narratives along with a description of their role at Jefferson School. They are listed in the order in which they appear in the stories and are accompanied by the page number



in which they first appear. This table can be referenced by the reader, as needed, because the names and stories continue to intertwine throughout Chapter 4.

**Table 1 Key People Appearing Within the Narratives**

| <b>NAME</b>         | <b>POSITION</b>              | <b>PAGE FIRST APPEARS</b> |
|---------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| LaKeisha Wright     | Secretary                    | p.69                      |
| Regina Jackson      | Former principal             | p.69                      |
| Dawn King           | Parent Coordinator           | p.70                      |
| Josephine Hightower | In-School Suspension Teacher | p.71                      |
| Ashana Reed         | Fifth grade student          | p.72                      |
| Briasa Hicks        | Fifth grade student          | p.72                      |
| Charity Jones       | Sixth grade student          | p.72                      |
| Sacoyia Davis       | First grade student          | p.72                      |
| Mike O' Reilley     | Counselor                    | p.73                      |
| Cheron Chesterfield | Fifth grade student          | p.73                      |
| Gail Reese          | Gym teacher                  | p.74                      |
| Shaquille Evans     | Third grade student          | p.75                      |
| Jenny Bruntz        | Fifth grade teacher          | p.89                      |
| Mandy Peters        | Fifth grade teacher          | p.89                      |
| Sandy Mullen        | Learning Support teacher     | p.90                      |
| Carol Shawn         | Second grade teacher         | p.91                      |
| Clarita Brown       | Second grade teacher         | p.91                      |
| Holly Paulf         | First grade teacher          | p.92                      |
| Paulette Risch      | Literacy Coach               | p.94                      |
| Ted Hill            | Math Coach                   | p.94                      |
| Cathy Highfield     | First grade teacher          | p.94                      |
| LaQuanna Steele     | Fourth grade student         | p.111                     |
| Markita Madison     | Fifth grade student          | p.111                     |
| Donna Cox           | Parent                       | p.112                     |
| Sarah Cox           | Third grade student          | p.112                     |
| Ana Rooney          | Intern principal             | p.114                     |

## **PART 1: Removing the line...the stories of LaKeisha, Josephine, Gail and Mike...building trust and developing people**

### **Key Moments with LaKeisha**

*When I first met LaKeshia, she was not only the building secretary but also the “keeper of the line.” Everyone from the start made mention of it, and years later the staff still talks of it. There was an imaginary line that Ms. Jackson had created in the office – one side for staff and one side for LaKeshia and Ms. Jackson. Even if Ms. Jackson could be seen by the staff, she could not be addressed unless staff asked Ms. Jackson to see if she was available. My first major change at Jefferson was to open the door to the principal’s office and take away “the line.” I explained to LaKeisha that I believed in a child-centered school where staff, parents and students work collaboratively with the principal. At first, Lakeshia seemed happy. Not only was she the secretary but also the parent of a child in first grade and a set of twins in third grade. I would come to learn later that LaKeisha, who was abandoned by her own mother as a child, saw herself on a personal mission to be the antithesis of the mother she would describe as never being there for her. On the surface, the idea of a child-centered school seemed what LaKeisha had always wanted. She had gone to college herself to become a teacher but left her senior year to have the twins. She held education in high regard and expected college to be in the future for her girls. LaKeisha was so pleased that I was experienced and came from high-achieving schools – she had pride in her school and community and wanted the best for Jefferson School. Initially, she seemed relieved that she would no longer be asked to keep the staff out of the office. She could begin to talk to teachers about her girls and she enjoyed that. But very soon, LaKeisha began to realize that with “the line” gone, other things were changing, too. Many of those changes required major shifts in thinking and weren’t as easy or as welcoming as she may have thought...*

*...one night, LaKeisha called me at home to tell me she thought we had lost the integrity of the office. I asked her to explain what she meant and she said teachers were standing around laughing and telling stories at the end of the day. LaKeisha noted how Ms. Jackson had said the office was a “place of business” and teachers shouldn’t gather there. Ms. Jackson thought that talking and laughing was unprofessional and that visitors and the public might get the impression that staff was not working hard enough. LaKeisha was concerned. She had looked the teachers’ way giving them a stern look and they ignored her. I remember smiling and sharing with LaKeisha how I thought their laughter was a breakthrough sign...*

*...halfway through the year, LaKeisha had an issue with her youngest daughter. One Thursday in February, LaKeisha’s daughter and another student got into a verbal disagreement. The other little girl*

*slapped her daughter in the face in plain view of LaKeisha. LaKeisha jumped over her desk in front of parents, students and staff to tell her daughter to fight. The counselor and I broke up the fight, and he removed LaKeisha from the area. I went to LaKeisha and explained that her daughter would be suspended for fighting and that I also needed to sit and meet with her before she left for the day. LaKeisha called her father to come in. She later told others she thought she would be fired. LaKeisha began by telling me that since I'm not from the streets I don't understand why children need to fight. I calmly replied to her, as I had done with many other parents before her, that I wasn't telling her how her children should behave in the streets. The streets were her responsibility. But the school was mine. And with my responsibility, I was going to see that I would not have fighting in my schools. Children can't focus on learning if they are angry from fighting. I also told LaKeisha that I have had the children of secretaries and staff in my buildings before and even had my own son in fourth grade. Until today, it was never a problem. But this crossed the line – especially because LaKeisha knew my feelings on fighting and saw how hard I was working to encourage Jefferson children to settle their differences with words. I didn't think I could work with a secretary that would continue to encourage her own children to fight at school. I could clearly see LaKeisha struggle with my insistence upon nonviolent conflict-resolution...*

*... several months later, a woman who was in charge of university students doing coursework at Jefferson shared with me how she had noticed the school climate had changed and it was the kind of climate she wanted for her students. She specifically mentioned the change in LaKeisha and how her demeanor differed from the other elementary schools, I called LaKeisha in and hugged her. I remember saying, "LaKeisha, they're noticing. You're really doing a good job. We're even famous at the university." LaKeisha was thrilled and began to work even harder. Each time I'd hear something positive about the school at a principal's meeting, a board meeting or from a community member, I would come in and share that with LaKeisha. On our second Christmas, I looked out at LaKeisha's desk, and it was piled high with presents—definitely something new. I remember saying, "LaKeisha, I can't even see you." She said, "Ms. Amato, I'm having the best staff year ever. They like me now." I remember saying, "LaKeisha, they always liked you; it's just that for awhile, they didn't like themselves..."*

*...one day during our second year together, Dawn King, the parent coordinator, who also worked in the office, came to see me. She said she and LaKeisha had disagreed over how a child was disciplined by a staff member. During the discussion, LaKeisha criticized Ms. King for being too overprotective with her own child who was in eighth grade. Dawn became defensive and upset and the two began to pick at each other in front of staff. Dawn came to me to ask if her desk could be moved out of the office. I was really busy but I stopped and brought the two ladies into my office and closed the door. I told them that I was disappointed in them both. I said that I was so proud that our school had begun to become a team and that team started in the office. I told them that I liked how they worked so well together this year, and that I saw them operate not only as co-workers but also as friends. When*

*Dawn was having trouble with her husband, LaKeisha stepped in and did her work so she could go to court several afternoons, and when LaKeisha was having trouble remodeling her new house, Dawn covered for her. I also told them that they could clearly see that I didn't always think the same as my assistant or other administrators. But I didn't draw a line in the sand and make my workplace miserable. I also told them that the eyes of the school are on us, and if I let them be seen not handling differences in a responsible way others will think it'll be ok for them, too. LaKeisha came to me at the end of the day. She said she wanted to apologize. She liked and respected Ms. King and me. She said she never really had strong female role models in her life, and she was glad she was working with me. LaKeisha and I turned the corner that day...*

### **Key Moments with Josephine**

*Josephine was someone who had a reputation that preceded her. LaKeisha warned me about Josephine on my first day. She said Ms. Hightower was the Behavior Modification teacher and most people stayed out of her way. When I first heard Josephine's screech, I immediately knew why. Josephine had a voice that traveled down the hall and even made the adults sit up straighter. But screaming at adults or, worse yet, children, was not something I could tolerate. I also sensed that simply telling Josephine to stop would probably solve very little...*

*...when children were assigned to in-school suspension, I began to ask Josephine to join me in the conference. We would talk to the students about what happened and what they could do in the future so that a consequence wouldn't be needed. I quickly saw that Josephine had a great insight into behavior, and that she truly cared for the students. I also began to see that under the previous system of negative consequences, Josephine's room had become a dumping ground for students and teachers not taking responsibility for their actions. Her ISS (In-School Suspension) room was often filled to capacity, many times housing repeat offenders. But as the school began to address the behaviors of students and the practices of teachers, Josephine began to have some days with only a few children so she could push into classrooms and mentor young teachers or monitor some of the most behaviorally challenged students. Josephine began to see the fruits of her work, and she loved making a difference. She also really liked being a part of the office "team." Her daily attendance improved and she often began to stay after school to help me with loose ends that might need tied up...*

*...I decided it was time to address the screaming. So, during our student conferencing time, if a parent or child raised their voice, I would say, "Oh my, we don't scream at Jefferson School. That doesn't mean we always agree. Miss Hightower, you and I don't always agree, do we, but we don't need to scream to get our point across to each other, right? We simply choose our best words. It's our good ideas and not the tone of our voice that helps us settle differences, isn't it?" Josephine would contribute*

to the discussion and amazingly, the screaming ceased. As Josephine's persona transformed, so did her spirit. One day when Ashana and Briasia, two rough fifth graders got into a fight, I went into the ISS room to talk to Ashana. I found both Josephine and Ashana in tears. I asked them if everything was all right. Josephine said "yes" and followed me into the hall. She said when she talked to Ashana about her behavior, Ashana revealed that her dad was shot in a sour drug deal when she was very young. Josephine said her own dad was shot when she was young, and she understood that Ashana's emotions were raw and sometimes out of control...

...we also had ongoing trouble with Charity, a large streetwise sixth grade student. One day I called home to Charity's mother to let her know her daughter was with Josephine again. Charity's mom thanked me for calling and said would handle this with Charity when she got home. The next day, Charity came into school with a black eye and other bruises and reported that her mother had beaten her. By law, I had to make a referral to CYS which prompted Mom to call in just furious. Hadn't she said she would take care of things when I called? Mom said we were not to ever call her again about Charity's behavior if we wouldn't let her handle Charity the way she needed to. Josephine was there to hear the call. She responded by immediately taking Charity under her wing. So that Charity couldn't get into scrapes at lunch, Josephine asked Mrs. Moore to use Charity as a kindergarten lunch helper. Josephine would go to Charity's classroom teacher daily to check in and make sure her behavior plan was correctly implemented. She would bring her in religiously at the end of every day to discuss her progress and stop and tell me if the day was a good one. Thanks to Josephine, we never needed to call home again...

...as Josephine rose in importance and I often used her to assist with students, she became my biggest supporter. She would say, "Mrs. Amato, what I like about you is you say what you mean and you mean what you say." Because I was so close to the situation, I wasn't always aware of the changes occurring with Josephine. Then one day, the building's behavioral specialist came in and broke into a big smile, "Mrs. Amato, I have to hand it to you. You used an age-old trick. You put the bully on the team and we all know there is no "I" in team." I hadn't thought of it in those terms but I was beginning to realize that Josephine was in my corner. One day, the mother of Sacoyia, a first grader, came in and was angry with one of my decisions. She called me a "honky" and said she wanted a "piece of me." Josephine jumped to my defense and told Sacoyia's mom she would have to go through her to get to me. The tiny young mother was no match for the tall towering Ms. Hightower. She turned and quickly left the building. I laughed and said, "Josephine, didn't you think I could handle myself?" Josephine grinned, "Oh yeah, with you it would have been a scrap, no doubt. But I wanted her to know where I stood..."

## Key Moments with Mike

*...Mike was the building counselor by name but initially, I was the counselor by role. Mike had spent twenty-two years as a sixth grade teacher and was in his first year as a counselor. As I got to know Mike, I learned that he was one of the many with a long-time career in Fairfield who, by rite of passage, had found a way to retreat behind paperwork and away from some of the neediest kids I ever encountered. Mike liked the quiet kids who held their issues inside. Like many others, the kids who were behaviorally out of control and were literally crying for help, frustrated him...*

*...Mike struggled with my persistence. I visited homes, called grandparents, came in on weekends – whatever it took to reach kids, and I began to drag him with me. He kept telling me that I had “nice ideas,” but they wouldn’t work in the urban setting. He once told my husband who was visiting, “We think she’s too nice for our school.” I kept telling Mike that “kids are kids” and “people are people” and that’s where I stood until he could prove differently. Sometimes Mike’s own issues and oppositional behavior got in the way. He would duck outside for a cigar every time I pushed in a direction he wasn’t comfortable. For a while, that was OK with me because I knew the changes were major for him, and I recognized that sometimes he needed a break. But then one day I needed him to help mediate an argument between two fifth grade boys and the kids told me, “Oh, Mr. O’Reilley’s outside lighting up.” That’s when my bottom line came out – no cigars where kids could see. I secretly wondered if Mike could cope with the demands without one of his cigars...*

*...one of the conflicts I had with both Mike and LaKeisha was on the protocol for calling the police. I explained to the two of them that my experience with people who came into the school office angry did so because they had a problem—the wrong grade, dissatisfaction with how a teacher has handled an issue, a custody problem, a bus problem, etc. Some people just aren’t equipped to handle problems calmly and sequentially. That would be our job. We would model for our parents and staff how to effectively handle conflict and as those around us develop confidence in our abilities, they would come to us regularly for help in solving problems. Eventually, they may even adopt some of our strategies and choose to solve problems without us...*

*...I began to assign groups and individuals to Mike in a regular fashion. CheRon, a biracial fifth grade student, was one of the fifteen or so students that I had asked Mike to work with. One day we received a call from CheRon’s foster mom. We were aware that CheRon had been visiting with his natural mother – a cocaine addict showing some progress. CheRon’s foster mother reported that his natural mother had a relapse, overdosed at 3 a.m., and collapsed out on the street. Her body was discovered in the morning after being rained on all night. CheRon’s foster mom called and asked if Mike and I could come to the house that evening when they told CheRon. CheRon’s mom’s parents would be*

*there—they were white people who were estranged from their daughter because of her lifestyle and also her association with CheRon's father, who was an African American man incarcerated for assault and robbery. Mike and I arrived early and sat on the porch swing with CheRon. Mike did a wonderful job talking to CheRon who was just devastated but appreciative that we were there. CheRon's sisters had bonded to his foster mother, but she and CheRon had locked horns. CheRon would really need Mike in the difficult days ahead, and Mike let CheRon know that he would be there for him. Neighbors brought over food and the family asked us to stay for dinner. At the blessing they thanked God for the wonderful school people. On the way home, Mike told me he felt we were making a difference. He told me that although his job was hard, he was really beginning to love his work...*

### **Key Moments with Gail**

*Gail was a dark-skinned, petite African American woman who ruled the gym with an iron hand. Jefferson was the eighth elementary school that I had worked in and the only one where the kids hated gym and the gym teacher. During the very first faculty meeting that I had, Gail sat in the back with a red Fairfield Education Association shirt on and a calculated stare. I introduced myself and told a little about my experiences and my philosophy and beliefs and did a collaborative team building activity with the staff. At first the air felt tense, but then the room filled with laughter as people introduced their partners and got engaged in a creative task. Gail stayed after the meeting and asked if I had made up the duty schedules yet. When I answered that I hadn't, she offered to help. Knowing that the lunch hour can make or break the entire learning climate in a school, I asked Gail some questions to see what she had in mind. I shared with her my feelings about lunch – little ones first, restaurant voices, people walking students to and from the lunch areas, recess rules, etc. Gail shared with me that during the previous year, the staff had become angry with Ms. Jackson and had all quit from cafeteria duty. The contract stipulated that cafeteria duty was not mandatory so community people had been hired. Things very quickly went out of control, and the police had been called to the building three times during the last month of school because of serious brawls in the lunchroom. Gail said it often took all afternoon to calm kids down after a rough lunch period. She said she'd volunteer to put together a draft of a schedule and bring it in later in the week. She came back that same morning with one that was well done. I agreed to try it out for a couple of weeks. Gail said she found six people who would work for us – one of whom was Josephine...*

*...acquiring a routine for the lunch hour was exhausting to say the least. We had to quickly bring a structure to where there was none. We had to set limits, establish routines and procedures, introduce rewards and consequences and enforce the program with unrelentless and meticulous follow-through. We also decided to keep parents in the loop, so every time we gave children a reward or consequence we called or sent a letter home. We spent countless hours – before, during and after school reining in that time of day. Finally, by the end of the second nine weeks, the lunch hour was conforming to*

structure. However, while most of the staff left the building, ordered take-out or even went walking for the entire hour guaranteed by contract, six dedicated staff members were carrying the entire duty load. I was so grateful and proud of those teachers on duty who never had a break. They were working so well together, and the work was rough and thankless. Gail and I talked about this and we decided to treat the six to a "thank-you" lunch. Gail and I both enjoy cooking so I made barbequed ham and a pasta salad. Gail made deviled eggs and a pound cake. Gail's prep period was the period before lunch so we fixed plates for each duty teacher and we had our Student Council students deliver them to the teachers on duty with a thank you note on each plate. Later that day, Gail came to see me in tears. She said some of the others pulled her in and gave her a really hard time. It was for the most part the senior union leaders. They said there shouldn't be anything extra given to the duty teachers. Didn't they get paid? They told her that all our lunch had done was to make those who didn't take duty feel guilty. I asked Gail how the lunch made her feel. She said she was really tired of ninety days of duty, and the lunch made her feel appreciated. She said it was the first time she had felt appreciated in years. I hugged Gail and said then that I thought the lunch had served its purpose. At the end of the day, Gail stopped in the office on her way home. She said two more teachers volunteered for lunch duty because their afternoons were going so much better this year, and they wanted to pitch in. When I left Jefferson School, twenty-one teachers rotated days on a lunch duty schedule. Three of those were union leaders...

...Shaquille's mom called me to say that she'd like to meet with Ms. Reese and me. Shaquille was a new third grader who came to Jefferson from another district. Mom had tried to call Gail first but felt she was not really getting anywhere. She said Shaquille didn't want to come to school because he was in trouble for all the writing he wasn't doing in gym class. When I talked to Gail about setting up a meeting, she brought in her contract which said she had twenty-four hours to prepare for a parent meeting and could have a union rep there. I called Shaquille's mom back and scheduled for the following day. In the meantime, I dropped into the gym at varying times during the day only to see a lot of paper and pencil activity which I began to suspect was a mostly about keeping order and not much about physical education. The following day, I began the parent conference by asking Shaquille's mom to address her concerns. I then asked Gail to respond and asked if she had any concerns. Gail began by saying that Shaquille was a child, and she was the adult. If she said to write, that's what Shaquille should do. Shaquille's mom said it wasn't about not having Shaquille comply, but more to see what we could do together because he didn't want to come to school. Gail went on to say that her written work was done to assess the kids on the standards for physical education. I supported the use of some written work saying that keeping a portfolio was certainly a great way to organize a lot of information about a student. I also shared that in my past practice, I had worked with physical education teachers who used a variety of rubrics and assessments, some that might be somewhat shorter than what Gail was using. These could free up valuable time for exercise and to practice skills. I would see if I could get the teachers to e-mail me some samples for Gail to look at. Both Gail and the mother were appeased. After the conference,



*Gail came to tell me that she appreciated my support and said that she had never gotten that from Ms. Jackson. When I saw the kids up and running in gym class each time I popped in, I knew we had made huge gains...*

*...my first several months at Jefferson School were unlike anything I had ever experienced. The building was so out of control and so dysfunctional, I often joked that I was going to work in triage. I couldn't take phone calls during the day. I couldn't eat at lunch, and I definitely felt I couldn't leave the building for any reason. I had asked to be excused from district meetings until I could restore order to the troubled school. Luckily, the central office agreed to that. Finally, in December I decided that things had settled enough for me to go to the first Friday's principal's meeting. I went to Gail and asked her if she could be in charge of the building while I was out. I would only be several blocks away, and I'd ask Josephine and Mike to give her a hand. Gail got tears in her eyes, hugged me and said that she would love to do that. I remember standing there and feeling a great amount of guilt pass over me that day. Throughout my career, I had always had mentors and positive people around who praised and encouraged my work and me. I had always taken that for granted, almost as a given. But that day in the halls of the broken down and dilapidated Jefferson School, I saw what it was like for a teacher to be empowered and validated for the first time in a career that spanned 31 years. And I vowed, as a leader, to always remember the power of that moment and find ways to recreate it for as many others as I could so their talents as a teacher and person could be validated, too. When I got back from the meeting, Gail, Josephine and Mike had all done a great job. There were a few acting out children sent to the office, but they had handled things as I would have. I praised them and told them they were a great team. LaKeisha later told me that the three of them had argued about who could go into my office. I told LaKeisha it was OK with me to let them all go in there, if they had a good reason. After all, a good office isn't defined by its walls, it's defined by the people who work within them...*

## **Interpreting the Key Moments – Part 1**

Roland Barth (2001) tells us that “education as a job offers very little but as a calling, or profession, it offers much” (p. 5). Jefferson Elementary, like many traditional elementary schools in its time, had inherited a traditional framework based on a functional operational model that prevailed in educational circles from the early 1900's. Using a “factory-like” structure that paralleled and prepared students for their industrial-age jobs, schools like Jefferson operated within this familiar model (Fullan, 2001;

Senge et. al., 1999; Morgan, 1997; Goodlad, 1984; Lortie, 1975). Students were named to classes and reading groups. Jobs were assigned to adults, and the expected outcome was that the “whole” would function when each of the “parts” was running smoothly. Like a machine, the school was run at maximum speed and efficiency with the goal being to put out high-achieving students. Curricula was precise and standardized while teachers were controllers, inspectors and sorters.

Nothing was left to chance. Each action was scrutinized and analyzed. Teachers or students who could not keep up or who upset the flow were seen as a liability and were reprimanded immediately. Like many urban elementary schools in the 1990’s, as the board pressured Ms. Jackson when students did not meet the testing standards implemented by the state, Ms. Jackson in turn pressured the teachers (Kozol, 2005; Orr et. al., 2005; Portin, 2000; Tyak & Cuban, 1995; Sarason, 1990). From all the negative pressure and intensive scrutiny, Jefferson School had fractured. Teachers would not collaborate. They were disengaged and refused to supervise lunch or recess. Many had resigned. Students displayed anger, and achievement was declining. Parents were defensive and negative when they had to interact with school personnel. There was an abundance of distrust and finger pointing.

As a new leader, I spoke to the staff about a different model for the school. I introduced the notion of a child-centered school that sees all individuals within a “community of learners” (Fullan, 2001; Senge et al., 1999, 2000; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Rosenholtz, 1998). In this model, Jefferson School would be a place focused on children. Rather than simply orchestrating and telling, teaching would be approached as coaching and mentoring (Thomlinson, 1999; Resnick, 1999; Danielson, 1996;

Gardner, 1983). Motivation would be the responsibility of both the teachers and students (Saphier, 2005; Senge et. al., 1999, 2000). Expectations would be high, and there would be much reflection on the teaching and learning process (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Schon, 1987). Students and staff would work together to share in the creation of learning situations (Thomlinson, 1999; Resnick, 1999; Danielson, 1996; Gardner, 1983). Self-discipline would be more important than imposed systems of rules and regulations (Sugai & Horner, 2002; Mayer, 1995). Teachers would be empowered, capable of making decisions regarding instruction and rewarded for delivering quality instruction (Elmore, 2002; Dufour & Eaker, 1998). Children with special needs or circumstances would benefit from a host of experts (Senge et. al., 1999, 2000).

Morgan (1997) portrays organizations as operating within various metaphors. People within organizations often react to their perceptions of their system by moving successfully or unsuccessfully within these metaphorical models, switching back and forth according to their needs. For staff, this would mean abandoning skills that were part of the “machine metaphor” (p. 381) and acquiring and practicing those that were important in the “learning organization” (p. 391) metaphor.

But getting to this model would prove to be extremely difficult. An underlying culture of negativity (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1996, 1992; Kouzes & Posner, 1993) was embedded within the Fairfield system much deeper than even I imagined. As a new principal, I wanted to immediately focus on children first. But I quickly saw that in this particular environment, I could not ignore the needs of the adults. If I were to ask adults to meet the needs of students, I would have to address theirs (Maslach & Leiter, 1999; Farber, 1991). And having worked in other districts

previously, I recognized that the needs of these adults were much greater than any other staff members I had ever worked with.

Maslach and Leiter (1997) note that people who are good at what they do enjoy the process of work. Positive work creates an energy and flow that brings satisfaction to people and contributes to success for the organization. Conversely, when negativity enters the workforce, people cannot balance their interests with those of the organization. Organized around negative values, a school becomes what Deal and Peterson (1999) calls a “toxic culture (p.18).” Similar to other failing schools, Jefferson teachers had made their work environment fit their needs regardless of what that meant for students (Deal & Peterson, 1999). There was hiding behind paperwork, teaching that controlled rather than engaged students and screaming to get children to comply. The stories of Josephine, Mike and Gail clearly illustrate some of the rituals that were in place for adults.

Impacting change at a failing school is very challenging and has seen mixed results at best (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Change, even in a stable environment is a process and not an event and its path cannot be easily predicted (Fullan, 2001). Within the best change scenarios, one can expect an “implementation dip” (p. 41) where things become unraveled before they come together (Fullan, 2001). At Jefferson School, things were far from stable. So as the stories in this section reveal, change within this already unstable environment would and did travel in many unpredictable directions. Deal and Peterson (1994) suggest that because of the complexities and contradictions that present for principals within a negative climate, a balance of logic and artistry is needed to lead a building through a period of change.

That delicate combination frequently was helpful at Jefferson School especially in the dealings with the complex personalities. Within environments that are “emotionally high stakes,” recurring questions arise during times of change – “Am I safe?” “Am I adequate?” “Can I trust?” (Kanter, 2003). The perceived answers to these questions can either paralyze people or allow them to move forward. As the principal, I wanted to reassure staff and have them feel emotionally safe. However, I secretly wondered if because of the depth of negativity, if that might not occur for years. While I worked to be good to adults, I was also acutely aware that children lived in the present of Jefferson School and their needs were even more immediate.

Early on, I came to see that one very effective way to address staff’s emotional needs was to empower them. Looking to people’s strengths and being willing to utilize them in non-traditional roles, I was able to put some of their talents to use in creative ways. Kristoff (1996) notes that when individuals contribute their talents to benefit an organization, a strong foundation begins to form. Gail was skilled at scheduling so she could run the lunchtime program. Josephine was adept with kids who experienced tragedy or trauma so she was perfect for “Safety Patrol.” Mike was effective with the quiet and shy kids – so he organized a community outreach program that visited the nursing homes.

As each one began to experience success in their roles, it brought them increased satisfaction and they wanted to contribute even more (Sergiovanni, 2004, 1999, 1996; Senge et. al., 1999; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Saphier & King, 1985). None of these tasks were ones that I would have initiated or that I necessarily thought a school needed to have. But each was a great fit for the people involved, connected

them to kids in a way that they were comfortable with and gave us a great starting place.

Reform is only effective if it works within the context where it is initiated (Elmore, 2002; Collins, 2001; Senge et. al., 2000, 1999; Barth, 1990; Duke, 1987). In order to build relationships with staff members, I decided to try and set them up for success. Giving them a role of their own choosing and that was a good match for their individual skills was a good beginning. From there, as the stories illustrate, once a trusting relationship was established, teachers allowed me to push them into roles that went beyond what they wanted and were there to meet the needs of kids (Sergiovanni, 2004; Barth, 2003; Maslach & Leter, 1997; Kouzes & Posner, 1993; Farber, 1991).

Nonetheless, the path to empowerment was littered with a combination of gains and setbacks. When Gail first came to see me about the lunchroom she wanted no talking at all for students. We had to talk through why a silent lunch would not be good for kids and then ultimately why it would not be best for adults either. LaKeisha and Mike couldn't understand why the police shouldn't be called if someone was raising their voice. They hadn't thought about their school being viewed as a friendly place where people could disagree calmly and work towards resolution.

Fullan (1993) notes that solutions to complex issues require a depth of understanding. Organizations are the products of the ways that people in them think and interact. People cannot simply be mandated or told to change. Organizational learning takes place when people get the opportunity to develop and try out new practices in their own contexts (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker & Karhanek, 2004; Elmore, 2002, 2000; Fullan, 2001, 1999, 1993; Senge et. al., 2000, 1999). Some tangible

activities that foster change are varied governing ideas, innovations in infrastructure and shared management methods (Senge, 2000).

People like LaKeisha, Josephine, Mike and Gail who get the opportunity to work through these kinds of activities with their leader actually learn not only how to handle the changes of the present but also learn how to deal with changes that may occur within the future of their organizations. Leadership is a reciprocal process (Senge et. al, 2000, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1999, 1996, 1992; Deal & Peterson, 1999, 1994; Barth, 1990). The measure of its success is ultimately the strength of the relationship between those who lead and those who follow. But building deep relationships, particularly in a changing environment, holds many challenges for all adults.

Perhaps no story captures the complexity of that work as much as the story of LaKeisha. In a study of restructuring within Maine schools, Cox and DeFrees (1991) note that “change is simultaneous, interactive and messy.” LaKeisha’s role previously was to schedule appointments and turn people away; now a new set of skills had to be developed to manage an office where stakeholders shared responsibilities with the office. Parents, students and teachers who had no voice for years stood in line to have theirs heard. Teachers who struggled to manage children initially over referred students to the office, and children were often stacked up twelve deep. This shift directly affected LaKeisha who had to learn to gather information, prioritize questions and manage people who were waiting – all new and sometimes challenging skills for her.

Because LaKeisha was a quick study and a great multi-tasker, she quickly acquired the technical skills for the position. Yet the underlying changes in the value systems were much more difficult. For seven years, LaKeisha had lived with a system

that was based on control. Within her day, order and lack of conflict was valued. Now with a new leader, skills such as questioning and problem solving took their place. Letting go of some of the control was a loss of routine for her (Kearney & Hyde, 2003; Fullan, 1993; Peters, 1987; Marris, 1975). She had to leave behind the authoritative posture she had acquired and take on a welcoming and inviting posture. As the stories note, this change frequently created anxiety for LaKeisha.

As roles began to change, LaKeisha sometimes saw things as a weakening of her power...and mine. As the value structure at Jefferson School began to change, the school's practices and procedures would need to reflect the changes. Positive routines, particularly in the office, would need to replace negative routines and unproductive practices would need "eradicated and buried" (Deal and Peterson, 1993, p. 127). And as illustrated, the change over to new practices wasn't always easy or simple.

Two strategies seemed to help LaKeisha adapt to the changes. First, I kept my door open, when possible and let her see and hear how I was handling things particularly when it came to people having a voice. Then, after the AM announcements, we would have an "office meeting." LaKeisha and I would talk through what was on the agenda for the current day and see if we had any unfinished business from the previous day. At first, the office meeting would be just for the two of us but over the years we added Mike, Josephine, Ms. King and the security guard. Each day our meeting served as a mini "pep-talk" and as a way to quickly focus on what was most important. Thomas Sergiovanni (2004), in "Strengthening the Heartbeat" notes that when schools operate from a core set of values, a covenant is created that builds a strong sense of



community. All this started from a few minutes set aside each day to focus on what was most important.

LaKeisha respected my knowledge and experience with schooling yet there was a part of her that frequently saw kindness as weakness. On more than one occasion, she expressed that compassion and empathy would not hold up in this inner city community as well as physical prowess and toughness. But as LaKeisha came to experience caring and kindness for herself and her children, she learned to embrace a new kind of power she hadn't yet considered (Sergiovanni, 2004; Senge et. al., 1999; Deal & Peterson, 1999). Bolman and Deal (2001) suggest that the essence of leadership is "offering oneself and one's spirit" (p. 106). For Lakeisha that frequently meant using a maternal stance and mothering her because that's what she most needed some days.

Slowly and with time, LaKeisha's line blurred. Teachers were learning to be active and equal voices in the school community. Issues were being resolved because people were acquiring the skills to handle them. LaKeisha could finally focus on purchase orders, managing records, preparing communications and other things she did really well and that people praised her for.

I also began to use LaKeisha as the in-house expert on the school and the community's history (Fullan, 2001; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Deal & Peterson, 1994). Principals need to operate from an understanding of the present as well as the past. LaKeisha was one of the few people who actually worked and lived within the community. She had an inside view of life within the urban setting. She knew the children and their families and had a firsthand understanding of the fight to survive in a

about other issues such as racism and violence that affected our school. For me, she was a valuable resource and someone whose insights and interpretations I frequently sought out as part of my understanding of the building.

Part of leading is exhibiting the demanding virtues of patience and understanding while new ideas and practices are explored (Fullan, 2001; Senge, 2000, 1999; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1996, 1991). Sometimes, as the leader at Jefferson School, I became very frustrated with the ups and downs of adults because I knew things were not where they needed to be for children. However, I also felt that giving people time to work with me and get to know me was important before we started too many new things. Peter Senge (2000) noted that early on in his career, he was presenting a workshop on change and at the end of the workshop, a principal stood and said, "It all sounds great but where do we start on Monday?" (p. 196). I frequently had that feeling. I knew in my head what needed done. But I frequently wondered where to start each Monday.

As the school switched from a traditional top-down management approach to a learning community with a collaborative child-centered decision-making system, things kept changing and the change process itself was often challenging (Senge et. al., 1999; Fullan, 1993; Stacey, 1992; Pascale, 1990). At first, I tried to insulate staff from some of the changes by taking on a lot of responsibilities myself and modeling for them how things might be handled. However, I quickly found that handling things that a counselor, In-School Suspension teacher or secretary should do kept me away from the classrooms, where I needed to be if I were to be the instructional leader (Fullan, 2001, 1993; Senge et.al., 2000, 1999; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Barth, 1990). I had to trust

the processes of involving others and believing in the power of a group. But frequently, I felt a sense of urgency and didn't want to wait until others worked through their issues. Because I'd worked in successful schools before, I knew what life was like for other children in school settings and I really wanted that for the children of Jefferson School.

As a new leader, I decided to put my initial focus on developing a core team that would support the office. I targeted Mike and Josephine and LaKeisha because of their roles. Then Gail emerged wanting to help with lunch and I included her because I saw that she had that underlying spirit of caring that I was hoping the others would see and learn from. After I saw how much Gail contributed, I began to look at the strengths of other teachers in the building, as well. Working with Gail was a good way for me to learn to look at people outside of their roles and see what they can offer in the way of talent. As a principal, finding multiple levels of leaders who can help move a building forward is critical (Collins, 2001; Elmore, 2000; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Spillane & Halverson, 1999; DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

As the stories illustrate, working through the changes with this initial group was not always easy. As much as I wanted to see this core team jump in and immediately interact with children and each other in kind and compassionate ways, the effort was often slow and tedious. As a leader, I frequently struggled with my timing. I never quite knew if I was pushing too hard or not enough. When I heard one of Josephine's screeches from my office, I wanted to push harder but when I saw her wrap her long arms around Justin, I wanted to give her time.

As Josephine, Gail and Mike began to meet with success, they started to challenge the practices and notions of some of their peers who were still holding on to

familiar routines from the past. This wasn't always easy for them, particularly with the power that some of their peers had within the union. While they initially met with strong resistance, eventually the resistance passed and those who were totally unable to get on board left for other buildings or positions. I came to rely on these three staff members as an integral part of my team for the remainder of my tenure at Jefferson School. As trust began to develop between them and me, we were able to make deeper and much more far-reaching changes in the work and learning environment (Sergiovanni, 1999; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Deal & Peterson, 1994; Fullan, 1993; Maslach & Leiter, 1997).

The change in adult attitudes quickly began to contribute to success for kids. Each one of these adults began to connect to certain children in new and powerful ways (Sergiovanni, 1999; Senge et. al., 1999; Deal & Peterson, 1994; Barth, 1990). Although initially I had to spend an abundance of time with each individual, coaching and supporting them through what their new role would be in a child-centered school, they eventually brought their own personalities and dispositions to the positions making them their own. However, we still regularly talked, as a team, through the thinking behind actions and decisions to maintain a consistency and common language for dealing with our school and its children (Fullan, 2001; Sergiovanni, 1990; Senge et. al.). As our practices united and spread throughout the building, we began to see less and less children referred to the office and more and more remain in class and experience success in their academic work.

In a report released to the McRel organization on balanced leadership, (Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003) out of twenty key leadership responsibilities of a principal,

creating a positive culture that fosters a system of shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation is listed as the number one change that will impact an organization. Barth (2001) defines culture as a complex set of norms, attitudes, beliefs, values, ceremonies, traditions and myths that historically transmit a pattern of meaning (p. 7). He explains that a school's culture might best be assessed with three questions one can ask as they step into the halls of a building. What do you see, hear and experience? What don't you see hear and experience? Who is making the decisions? The narratives in Part 1 illustrate how the answers to these questions changed over the three-year period at Jefferson School. People are at their best when they operate within a system of shared beliefs (Saphier & King, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2004; Senge et. al., 1999; Deal & Peterson, 1994; Barth, 1990).

These key moments look at the challenges that leaders face as they begin to reverse a cycle of negativity and build a caring culture. The line was gone at Jefferson School. The task of creating something good in its place for students and staff was certainly a complicated endeavor.

## **PART 2: Rearranging the rows...the stories of Jen, Mandy, Carol, Ted and Paulette...in the shift from control to creativity and curiosity in the classroom**

### **Key Moments with Jen and Mandy**

*Jen and Mandy weren't the first teachers to welcome me on board. As a matter of fact, they initially remained in the background. We first began to get acquainted beyond the school day. From my last principalship, I learned that if I came into school early or stayed a short while after everyone left and grabbed a few quiet moments to myself, I got much more accomplished. Initially, Jen and Mandy were the only signs of adult life beyond the school day. One day after school, the building had emptied within its usual five-minute span. I was left with a host of students who didn't get picked up. In a setting where the union had told staff never to put a band-aid on a child let alone spend time with them outside the school day, no one would think to stay and assist me. This particular day, there were many children left behind and Jen and Mandy heard the noise. They offered to entertain students while I contacted their parents. Jen, Mandy and I stayed at school until 7:30 that night and many, many nights after. The girls told me their stories. And I told them mine. Both girls shared how they were attracted to the urban setting because they liked the uniqueness of the children. They were only second year teachers; neither had put in one full year yet. Jen shared her suburban upbringing in a family of two. Her mom was a nurse. Her dad was an engineer. Her parents divorced when she was in high school and she strongly identified with students who had fractured homes. Mandy had a privileged upbringing in a stellar suburban school district. Her father was a high-ranking executive in a local clothing company and her mom a decorator. She went to Pitt and was fascinated by the urban setting that was so different than her home. The girls told me they wanted to make a difference and that they liked hearing that I always said that I believed every child could learn in the right environment. In those dark hours, before and after school, the three of us began to build a powerful support system...*

*...because Jen and Mandy were bonding with students, their classrooms were becoming places where children began to get excited about learning. Everyone was noticing. When we had walk-throughs or visits from district administrative staff, their classrooms were being praised. While other young teachers were struggling with management and student compliance, Jen and Mandy were moving ahead with the curriculum and instruction. One day the district math coach came along with me while Mandy was doing a lesson on fractions. Mandy had ordered pizza boxes and the students made cardboard pizzas in groups to represent various fractions. They then used these boxes to discuss equivalent fractions. At the time, we were focusing on "The Principles of Learning" and Mandy's room demonstrated*

many of them. The math coach asked me if he could ask Mandy to have one of her classes taped as a study tape for other teachers. He was impressed with the rigor, level of student engagement and high level of expectation Mandy had for each student. Mandy was flattered and agreed to the taping. Then at the end of the day, she came to me in tears. She said some of the older teachers said she shouldn't have agreed to the taping. They told her they had an unwritten agreement not to be taped. It was a union issue. Tapes could then be used to document bad teaching. They said only principals should observe, never coaches or teachers. I told Mandy I had teachers taped before in my other schools and it was never a problem. Mandy went home and talked to her roommate who was a teacher in a suburban district. She said teachers there worked together there all the time. I told Mandy I knew it was hard to be seen as a "principal's pet" and that I thought the taping would be a good learning experience but I would support any decision she made. Mandy did the tape. It still makes me smile watching it now—she and the kids are amazing...

...at the end of my first year, I had some major concerns regarding Special Education. At Jefferson, all IEP students were grouped together to receive pull-out support. I knew that these children had much to offer and much to get from the regular education classroom. But first, I needed to address the Emotional Support students who were not ready to participate in instruction. In my previous district, we had a strong Resource Room where children went to get coaching for specific behavioral goals that they worked towards within the regular education classroom. Unlike Fairfield, where the Emotional Support (ES) program was often a "life sentence", students in my previous school frequently earned their way back to classes and activities with their grade level peers. I called my former elementary school and took Sandy, a young learning support teacher who had worked in a center for troubled kids, and Jen to visit. The two girls loved the day and had a lot of questions and ideas for me on the ride home. The next day, Jen came to see me. She said she knew that I wanted Sandy to pilot the ES class because of her experience but she wondered what I thought about her giving it a try. She reminded me that she was also certified and she said that the ES kids were always her favorite. She said she believed that if these tough kids had a room to go to when they just couldn't get it together that maybe they wouldn't be so angry and frustrated all the time. She said she knew the job would be hard and she'd need my help. I said I had seen her with these kids before and I thought she was a good fit for the program. I said I would agree to her in that position if we limited her to no more than seven kids for the first year. I also said Sandy would have to be in agreement because she would now have more kids to service. Sandy did agree and the following fall we opened up what became a very successful Emotional Support Resource Room with Jen as the teacher...

...on the final evening of our stay at the Governor's School, a knock came on my door after 11PM. It was Jen. She said she had a very upsetting conversation with Mike. He told her that many of the other teachers in the school were unhappy with Mandy and her. He said that other staff members

*thought the girls were too easy on kids. The teachers were saying that if kids were allowed to eat wear coat in their classes, they would get mad when other teachers would tell them they couldn't. Jen explained that she and Mandy had rules, too, but sometimes a hat or headband might slip by because they were focusing on teaching. Jen said she told Mike that the reason kids listened in their rooms was because they used active learning strategies, worked in groups and had kids work for classroom rewards. Jen also told Mike that many times students who were embarrassed or humiliated in negative classrooms were sent to her room to calm down. Jen felt she was doing her job by calming the student down but then other teachers would become agitated or resentful because the child hadn't cooperated with them. Jen said that often when she conferenced with kids after an incident she found that the adult had, in fact, escalated the incident by acting childlike themselves. I told Jen that she was doing a wonderful job and not to worry about the others. The following day, I had our Jefferson Governor's School team talk about positive strategies for instruction and classroom management. We decided to recommend to the school that some of our grant money be set aside for a behavioral specialist who could work with and coach all of our teachers in positive behavioral strategies...*

## **Key Moments with Carol**

*Carol was one of the first people to offer me encouragement. She was a long time Fairfield employee who did her student teaching in Fairfield through the University of Pittsburgh in the 1970's and then took a position there after graduation. Carol stopped by to say that she really appreciated the small touches- the treats I left in the boxes, the donuts I brought on Fridays and how I always said thank you to the class and teacher after I visited. Carol never told me the stories the others had- of Ms. Jackson putting her palm in their face, of her turning away when they spoke and of them taking a collection for group therapy when she berated them in front of others. In Carol, a far away sadness in her eyes caught it all. Others told me about Ms. Jackson and Carol. They said Ms. Jackson resented Carol because her husband was a successful administrator in another district and to Ms. Jackson, Carol's knowledge was threatening...*

*...I had to call on Carol early. Ms. Brown, one of the two other second grade teachers was falling apart. Ms. Brown, I came to learn, had been coached out of a nearby district after failing to make progress on an improvement plan focused on lesson design and classroom management. She was related to Ms. Jackson's husband and was given a job at Jefferson School. Several parents called me to request that their child be moved out of the class. One was a Special Education student who had had a bad experience with a troubled teacher the year before. The other second grade classroom already had three additional students so the only choice was Carol's room. When I talked to Carol regarding the student, she said this happened every year and it wasn't fair. She said she always did her job and got asked to do more and Clarita did less and was always asked to do less. I told Carol that I had inherited*



*this situation, not created it. I would need time to see it for myself but I promised her that we would not be doing this the following year. I told Carol I believed there was no place in a building for an inadequate teacher and all the other teachers and many children suffer because of it. Before October, I had enough evidence gathered to see that Ms. Brown should not teach second grade. Although I drafted an improvement plan, when I presented the documentation to Ms. Brown and her PSEA representative, she decided to retire early. Carol came in later and said that was the first time she ever knew of a teacher in their building being served an unsatisfactory. She said she would be forever grateful...*

*... during my second year at Jefferson, along with the "Data Days" and "Learning Walks", I began to ask teachers to meet in grade level teams. After the second meeting, Carol came in to see me. She asked if I knew that their contract guaranteed them a prep period each day. I told her that I did and that I also knew the contract specified particular working hours. I said I had been willing to make exceptions for doctor's appointments, teachers taking extra classes and family emergencies. I said I could also remember who had asked and how frequently. I said I could follow the letter of the contract and not use the prep time but I would ask them to follow the letter of the contract, as well, and not come in late or leave early, if that's how they wanted it. I also added that I wouldn't call a meeting unless I had something important to talk about. I said how time was always such a valuable commodity to me as a teacher and I wouldn't ask teachers to give up some of theirs for something that wouldn't be useful. Carol said she hadn't thought of it that way but she must have put the word out. I had 100% attendance at the meetings and we did some of our best teaming and decision-making during these times. Carol was always the first to come and she was always the most prepared. I always asked teachers to bring something- test scores, lesson plans, or student work. I had the coaches attend, too, and we talked about instruction, assessment and pacing. My third year in Fairfield when I also began to work at Washington Elementary, the teachers there came to me right away and asked if we were going to do grade level meetings. They had heard from the Jefferson teachers how valuable the meetings were and they wanted to do them, too...*

*...as we continued do more focused observations and "Learning Walks", I noticed that Carol only bought into suggestions to a certain point. She had a very hard time letting children work in groups or get up and move around. On one visit when I mentioned "talking partners" she spent a good deal of time telling me how that kids who have too much freedom take advantage of things. I remember saying that I saw talking partners as a responsibility and not a freedom and with the right coaching, critically talking about things has been proven to be one of the best ways to learn. Carol began to entertain the idea a little more after one of our cross grade level "Learning Walks". When Carol saw Holly teach a much more diverse and even younger group than hers using those strategies, she knew it could be done. She began to try things out in her room. The switch was interesting. First, she began by having kids talk across the rows. Then she pushed two desks together for a while; and then four. She also began to let kids read*

*together and then work together to write. With each change, the level of learning in her class continued to climb...*

*...one day, I visited Carol's room unannounced to do a required formal observation. It was the morning of Valentines' Day and Carol had been out on a two week sick leave and was only back for four days. The lesson I observed Carol teach had some moments that were obviously awkward. Carol appeared to have been not prepared for the lesson and spent time paging through her manual and her resource kit to get materials. This was in apparent contrast to any announced observations I had done in the past where she was always meticulously prepared. Seeing this bothered me because I knew how good Carol could be if I told her I was coming but I wondered what kids really got on a daily basis if she thought I wasn't coming. I jotted down a suggestion about tightening up transitions. At our post conference, when I shared my notes with Carol, she became extremely defensive. She said she couldn't believe I would make a comment like that. Wasn't she just back from a sick leave? Wasn't this the AM of Valentines' Day? I said that I understood that both of those were factors that teachers might have to accommodate for, but that on this February 14<sup>th</sup>, these second graders needed the best math lesson they could possibly get and I wasn't sure that they had gotten it. I also said that the write-up reflected many positive things about her lesson but that part of my job was to help people grow and this was an area I felt we should begin to address. Carol said she would talk to her union rep because she wanted the comment off the feedback sheet because she had been out on a sick leave. I told her she could bring in her union rep to discuss matters further but the comment was staying. I told her she was more than welcome to write a rebuttal if she wanted and I would attach it to my notes. I also told her that in my career as a teacher I grew the most from people who challenged some of my practices and made me look at things from a different set of eyes. I ended by saying that if she was willing to work on her transitions a little; I think her lessons could move to a new level. Carol came back the next day and said she was not going to write a rebuttal. She thought about things and decided that we can all be learners. At the end of my three years, when I announced that I was leaving the district, Carol was the first to come and privately see me. She said she would miss working with me and added, "I really wasn't very happy when you pushed me, but it made me a better teacher and I like that." I told Carol I would miss her, too, and my hope for all of them was that they would continue to grow...*

### **Key Moments with Ted and Paulette**

*The selection process for the coaches and interventionist was very lengthy and deliberate. There were first and second interviews, written components, and principal recommendations. Candidates were screened for their knowledge of balanced literacy, math content knowledge, ability to use data to guide interventions, and the teacher's ability to develop rapport with staff and students. Points were tabulated and nine staff members were finally chosen. When I went to the district meeting to place the teachers chosen, I spoke up about the teachers I thought were the best fit for Jefferson School. The other*

*principals became annoyed and said that Jefferson School always got the best of everything and it wasn't fair. Our test scores had already started to climb and I really didn't want the good work we had done so far to get clouded with political issues. I jumped in and said I could work with any of the nine coaches. I said I thought we had done a good job selecting all of them and I was planning on working with whomever I received, anyways. So to keep the peace, I said I'd take the bottom three scorers. And that's how Ted and Paulette came to me at Jefferson School...*

*...early on, I sat with the coaches to develop an aggressive schedule that had them pushing into classrooms as well as doing individual and small group pull-out. For Paulette, we concentrated on grades K-2 and for Ted grades 3-6. During the first several months, I accompanied them on classroom visits for at least a part of the time. We talked daily and I offered them feedback and support. One afternoon, when the two of them went to a district coaches meeting, they came back and asked to see me. They said some of the more experienced coaches in the other buildings had a much lighter schedule. They had put in extra slots for data work and team planning and they were pushing Paulette and Ted to do the same. Paulette spoke up first. She said she liked our schedule but she thought I might get pressured from the other principals to keep the schedules the same in all the elementaries. I said I wasn't worried about the other principals. I was worried about what would happen to our kids if they didn't get the help they needed. Paulette also said that at the meeting, the district curriculum coordinator told them not to take the lowest students or the Special Education students. She wanted them to target kids who would be able to make quick gains. I told Paulette and Ted that at Jefferson School, we would schedule all three groups for intervention. The lowest children and our disabled would not be ignored. Both Ted and Paulette quickly agreed. Then out of nowhere, Paulette began to share a story with Ted and me. She said she had never had trouble with Regina like the others had because she always did her job by doing what was best for kids. But then one day parents were at the school for a program and Regina was giving instructions on where to line up. Paulette approached her about two little ones who were in the wrong place. Regina mistakenly read her comments as a challenge and in front of parents and students, pointed at Paulette and yelled, "You get back there and don't ever challenge my authority ever again." Paulette said she tried to explain but Regina put up a hand and wouldn't let her near. Paulette began to cry. I told her I was sorry she was treated that way and she was a good leader. She said she was glad I was there...*

*...one day, Paulette came to see me about Cathy. Cathy was a first grade teacher displaced in the move. Paulette had been to her class and had pushed in and done some strategies but wasn't really getting how to organize her whole literacy period. We also had Holly in our first grade who was doing a very outstanding job. I suggested to Paulette that we ask Cathy to observe Holly on the first two days of each unit. Those days contained the major skills for the unit. Then we'd have Cathy adjust her weekly plan by two days and do them after she watched Holly. I asked Paulette if she could rearrange her*

*schedule to go with Cathy and debrief with her about what she saw- particularly because Paulette had been an outstanding first grade teacher herself. Paulette agreed. I spoke to Cathy without Paulette there to see if she would be comfortable. Cathy knew she was struggling a little, so she welcomed the idea. Visiting Holly's class opened up many rich opportunities for Paulette to work with Cathy throughout the year. They both grew from the experience...*

*...at the end of the year, all of the reading coaches and interventionists had a meeting with their training supervisor. As they reviewed the district scores, Paulette's data from Jefferson School was amazing. Our students had fared better than any of the other buildings and Paulette came back thrilled and proud of her work and the work of our other teachers. That summer a suburban district recruited Paulette and she left us at Jefferson School. She came in to see me to say that she was torn about her decision but she had two young children and she was worried about the long term status of the district. I told her I understood and we would really miss her. Paulette cried again. Ted continued to blossom while our math scores soared. During my third year, he came to see me to say that along with the district math coach he was asked to present at the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM). Hearing of their work with the IFL, they were approached to do a workshop on content focused coaching around conceptual problem solving. Both Paulette and Ted had come so far...I was so proud of them...*

## **Interpreting the Key Moments – Part 2**

Change in educational organizations often starts out small and grows gradually. (Fullan, 2001; Collins, 2001; Senge, 1999; Fullan, 1993; Marris, 1975). Collins (2001) in "Good to Great" reports that organizations which are able to make "the good to great transformation" (p. 6) have no single "defining moment, no grand program, no killer innovation, no miracle moment" (p.14). Rather each institution has a process that resembles "pushing a heavy flywheel one turn at a time building momentum until the point of breakthrough" (p.14).

From the years of negativity, the Jefferson School flywheel was extremely heavy. There would be no "fix" or "program" or "grand plan" (p. 14) that would begin to move

the school forward. Instead, change would happen when the people would join forces and collectively push together to find enough strength to begin to move at all.

Within schools, successful change takes multiple levels of leaders (Collins, 2001; Senge, 1999; Fullan, 1993). At Jefferson School, staff members like Jen and Mandy who would make more than a surface level commitment to improving their struggling school were paramount. Teachers were needed who would recognize that the children from the Fairfield community were complicated people. Like all other children they had bodies, minds, hearts, spirits, hopes, dreams and aspirations. They also had histories and neighborhoods and a lot of baggage that comes with poverty (Payne, 1998). Teachers would have to be willing to face the students before them but just as importantly face the challenge of educating them with the belief that it could be done.

Teaching is a powerful calling for many young people (Ayers, 2001). Like Jen and Mandy, a large majority of beginning teachers report that they are called to teaching because they love children and they love being with them. They want to be the thoughtful caring adult who nurtures, challenges, coaches and cares for a child. Newly trained teachers see classrooms as places of “possibility and transformation” (p. 6) not just for students but also for themselves, as well. Beginning teachers often report that they like what happens to them when they are with children; they became more human, more generous, more in touch with their inner selves. Novices say they choose teaching as an act of construction and reconstruction and as a way to change the future (Ayers, 2001). Yet few teachers are able to carry that ideal very far into their teaching lives (Elmore, 2000; Goodlad, 1984; Lortie, 1975).

As with Jen and Mandy, teachers frequently find themselves in environments that do not share their values and goals. They are quickly socialized into procedure-centered places characterized by hierarchy, control and compliancy (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Rosenholtz, 1989). Unfortunately, what begins as enthusiasm and excitement about educating young people turns into criticism for being naïve and idealistic. The notion that schools should be nurturing, accessible, responsive places for children is often portrayed as youthful thinking. Young teachers are told to be realistic, conformist and voiceless and submit to the structures established within the schools by those who have been there longer (Ayers, 2001).

James (1996) notes that the stories educators tell each other shape and define a school's culture. These stories clarify the group's values, explain their worldview and reinforce and interpret events (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; James, 1996; Sarason, 1990). The stories at Jefferson School were brutal. So many good teachers had resigned. The best students had withdrawn to private schools. The teachers needed therapy. The students didn't care. Young teachers were greeted with these atrocious accounts their first very day, often fresh from colleges and universities, one foot barely inside a public school. Sometimes it seemed as if the senior teachers lavished in telling the newcomers how rough things were almost as if to imply how tough they were to have survived.

In Fairfield, the way experienced staff treated the new teachers was appalling. There was no welcome breakfast, no folder of schedules, no going out for a bite to eat at the end of a day. In fact, especially when I first arrived, the two groups were frequently polarized. If for some reason I would offer encouragement to the younger

teachers, the older teachers would become resentful and if I would support the older teachers, the younger teachers would retreat. Fullan (1991) notes that reform efforts can be easily thwarted when balkanization occurs. This happens when strong loyalties form within a larger group. Small subcultures, depending on their agendas, can create indifference, or worse yet, hostility.

At Jefferson School, a negative workplace had caused people to fragment. Over the years, the experienced staff had seen many young promising teachers like Jen and Mandy come and go. Many of those left behind had also tried to find a position elsewhere but couldn't. This left them cynical, bitter and negative and not particularly open to welcoming anyone new (Kearney & Hyde, 2003; Barger & Kirby, 1997; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Farber, 1991; Marris, 1975; Kubler-Ross, 1969). They knew too well the empty feeling of being abandoned for greener pastures.

While working together could reverse the cycle of negativity and create a new positive culture, teachers at Jefferson School wouldn't automatically come together simply because a new principal was in the building (Sergiovanni, 2004, 1999; Senge, 2000, 1999; Deal & Peterson, 1999). The practices and procedures central to a child-centered school would need to be introduced, understood, rehearsed and internalized – all of which takes time (Senge, 1999; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 1993). Systems change only as individuals change and the people at Jefferson School were at various entry levels in their capacity to accept change (Fullan, 2001). In a negative culture, innovation can be seen as a glimmer of hope to some but to others it can be seen as something to aggravate problems already known to exist (Fullan, 2001; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Marris, 1995).

A challenge for me as the building principal was to find a way to keep the young teachers' passion alive and not alienate them from others within the staff who were dealing with residual emotions from the past negativity. One way to accomplish that was to be very deliberate with public messages. Early on, I would hold all decisions up to the question, "What is best for the child?" and frequently note that I wasn't taking a side other than the side of the students. I would also work to find a time and place to have private conversations and celebrations with Jen and Mandy. We'd talk at after hours events like basketball games and Student Council dances or go out to dinner between school and events. Privately, I supported the young people and their ideas as often as I could but I was careful not to publicly take on their battles. If they were to have credibility with people like Mike and Josephine, I knew they'd have to earn it themselves.

Jen and Mandy believed it was important to meet students as people first and learners second. Although the physical, mental, and emotional characteristics of children change between kindergarten and high school, these young teachers recognized that students' basic needs as learners and human beings do not. Students report that they work harder for teachers who treat them as individuals and express interest in their personal lives outside school (Davidson & Phelan, 1999). They also report that teachers who are successful have taken the time to use a variety of strategies to make sure they understand what has been taught (Wentzel, 2002). Successful teachers are relaxed with students and give kids some autonomy. In their classes you can see children making choices, taking various roles in groups and



forming and expressing differing opinions (Resnick, 1999; Thomlinson, 1999; Danielson, 1996).

Jen and Mandy came to Jefferson School with many of these values intact and students immediately responded. However, more traditional teachers, particularly those who had trouble with the same students Jen and Mandy experienced success with, looked upon their practices as “babying” or “coddling.” They frequently said the children wouldn’t listen for them because Jen and Mandy had spoiled them. Using traditional “one size fits all” delivery of instruction leaves some children understanding very little. Often the students’ frustrations come out as negative emotion, which a traditional teacher curbs. And then, imposing reactive, consequence-based discipline only increases problem behavior because the root cause of the frustration has never been addressed (Sugai & Horner, 2002; Mayer, 1995).

Thomlinson (1999) notes that some children come to school with varied neurological wiring, weak adult support systems, a lack of trust, and a markedly damaged psyche from the experiences of poverty. While a number of teachers like Jen and Mandy come to the classroom armed with ideas and strategies to work through those obstacles, other teachers want to blame the children for making the job hard and challenging (Saphier, 2005; Sergiovanni 2004, 1999, 1996, 1992; Senge et. al., 2000, 1999; Thomlinson, 1999). I believed that I could eventually lead teachers to an understanding of responsive teaching with the help of the Pitt team and with our embedded staff development program. And I also felt that once staff tried some of the techniques they would experience success. However, as the building principal, I was frequently challenged with what to do in the meantime as the process unfolded.

The Emotional Support Room began to bring a lot of interest and credibility Jen's way. She took students that were having difficulty in other rooms and began to work with them on their behavior throughout the building. Jen was really good at communicating with teachers. She had daily charts and got teachers' support in filling them in. If she thought a child was having a rough day, she would even offer to push in or have her teacher's aide push in.

Mandy, though, was frequently a challenge for me. She was a really gifted young teacher who exhibited a lot of confidence and independence. In my other buildings, I would have paraded her front and center but at Jefferson School I was afraid she'd be resented. So here, in this negative culture, with all these damaged emotions, I had to resort to private praise, which seemed to be fine for her, but not really fair to me.

Carol's stories illustrate the path a career frequently takes for a good teacher. Carol liked kids and liked the community but she had been at Jefferson School for over twenty years operating behind closed doors and in isolation. When new ways of thinking were introduced, Carol became a little unnerved and perhaps a little resentful. Why couldn't she just be left alone? Didn't she just come in and do her job every day?

With so many things on an urban principal's plate, teachers like Carol have often been pushed aside (Fullan, 1993; Goodlad, 1984; Lortie, 1975). Carol once told me it had been six years since she had a principal observation. Seasoned teachers learn to do their own thing and begin to hold on to practices that work well for them in their setting (Senge et. al., 2000; Thomlinson, 1999; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Danielson, 1996). At a traditional urban school like Jefferson Elementary, the focus was on

teaching. Carol was viewed as a good teacher so she was virtually untouched, something she had become accustomed to.

However, in a child-centered school, the focus is on learning. Teaching is not seen as presenting or covering material; it is seen as creating conditions for student success (Senge et. al., 2000; Thomlinson, 1999; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Danielson, 1996). Students, particularly within the urban setting, are complicated entities and come with multiple experiences and needs. Many of them, even within Carol's room, were slipping through the cracks. Children need multiple strategies and techniques to reach them – particularly when they have had gaps in experience (Thomlinson, 1999; Danielson, 1996). Getting ideas from colleagues as well as from experts such as literacy coaches becomes critical in meeting individual needs. When teachers collaborate, an increased pool of ideas and materials emerge. This can be especially true if there is a combination of collaborators from within a system as well as those from outside (Little, 1990).

Senge (1999) tells us that in high performing schools, a supportive professional community is the “container” that holds a culture of growth. Teachers rarely engage in practices they know to be ineffective (Elmore, 2000). But within a traditional system of isolation, a flow of new ideas is only sporadically available (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 1993; Goodlad, 1984; Lortie, 1975). As a new leader, it was initially a challenge to get staff to think about doing things differently when they had a routine that served their individual needs for so many years.

Elmore (2000) reports that one of the strongest social norms among teachers is that all teachers are equally effective and therefore should be treated equally. However,

virtually any principal, teacher or student can on demand reveal who the gifted and struggling teachers are within a building (Dufour & Eaker, 1998). Jefferson School was no different. Clearly, Ms. Brown, who needed coached out of the profession was at one end of the spectrum. And others like Carol made up the other end with varying skills and abilities.

During my second year at Jefferson School, I learned that one way to spark curiosity, share ideas, and address individual teacher needs, was to hold grade level meetings and Learning Walks. Both of these venues enabled a host of issues to be examined collaboratively. Watching each other teach, sharing work, looking at data and discussing strategies allowed best practice to be explored in a collegial non-threatening way. Perhaps the most substantial benefit from teachers visiting classrooms and working together was that they got down to the “real story” (Senge, 2000, p.51) of improvement on their own.

Specifically, teachers began to talk through things like which lessons were best with figurative language and which materials could be effectively used for a re-teach of author’s purpose. They discussed why some lessons weren’t worth the time it took to gather the materials for it. They looked at student work and made notes and footnotes in their teachers’ manuals. They also began to develop an appreciation of each other’s skills and talents and rather than competing or working in isolation, they became learners together. One teacher once commented to me that to them Learning Walks were like a “dinner invitation to one’s home.” Both were ways to get to know people in a personal authentic setting.

It was not until Carol saw Holly doing the flex groups that she was able to visualize how that might play out. Teachers can be very motivated by their own good work. Guskey (2000) reports that for teachers the single most powerful motivator reported by them is an increase in student achievement. Lortie (1975) notes that the psychic rewards, “they have reached a student and they have learned” are those that drive teachers (p. 104). In the case of Carol, she recognized that the change in her practice made her more successful. And as she shared with me on my last days at Jefferson School, she was pleased. Yet, initially getting Carol to think about doing something new was very difficult. As Carol’s story illustrates, a traditional system of supervision and staff development actually isolates teachers and frequently holds them back (Elmore, 2002, 2000; Senge et. al., 2000; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Wallace et. al., 1997). It took a combination of my pushing and Carol seeing others use some of the new techniques to finally get her moving.

Successful school reform occurs most often when the building principal assumes the role of instructional leader. Part of that leadership role is modeling and emulating the role of adult learner or “leading learning” (Senge et. al., 2000, p. 416). It is important for teachers to see how knowledge is exchanged in a child-centered school. If teachers see a leader who is able to trust the collaborative process they will see alternating times of uncertainty, surprise, inquiry and coherence – all experiences they and their students will have as authentic learners (Senge et. al., 2000).

During the team meetings and Learning Walks, I was able to join the teachers at Jefferson School as a learner and not a supervisor. With all the other roles and responsibilities of the position, principals report that being the instructional leader is the

one most difficult to assume (Marzano et. al., 2005; Leithwood et. al., 2001; Fullan, 2001; Elmore 2000; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Danielson, 1996; Duke, 1987). I found collaborative opportunities like grade level meetings and classroom visits created the perfect opportunity for me to join together with others to learn about learning. I also learned that when I used this time wisely, the developing of the people in my building didn't have to fall on me alone. I could share this role with coaches, other teachers, district curriculum specialists and other administrators. My task would be to coordinate their efforts and provide the structure and support for the meetings and visits.

Collaborating on the wrong things will have no positive effect on a system over time (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Elmore, 2000; Spillane, 1999; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Sykes, 1996). Once a culture of trust was established at Jefferson School, we had to collaboratively examine student and adult performance with a critical eye. Senge et. al. (1999) calls this a "deprivatization of practice" (1999, p. 327) and notes that it marks a time when real change can begin. In my second and third year at Jefferson School, I made it a point to participate in all the Learning Walks, Data Days, team planning meetings and In-service Days to raise the necessary questions about the low levels of student achievement.

I knew Jefferson teachers had a long-standing history of using social issues as a shield to hold back questions that might arise regarding the effectiveness of their pedagogy. That pattern would need to change if we were to move forward. I pushed in with the coaches and visited Special Education rooms. I did many formal and informal visits to classrooms. I participated in the trainings with the Institute for Learning and the

Reading Achievement Center. I began to use every available opportunity to initiate or join in conversations centering on instruction.

At Jefferson School, the systematic review of data also helped stretch teachers. Looking at qualitative data from the Learning Walks as well as quantitative data from the DIBELS (Dynamic Indicator of Basic Literacy Skills), 4Sight and Curriculum Based Assessments (CBAs) made teachers consider new teaching strategies or grouping options they hadn't previously. Thinking about our practices in a collaborative way moved us from using assessments to inspect or point a finger to focus on ways to improve teaching and learning. Jefferson teachers were learning to accept the diverse skills and abilities of each individual and find a way to incorporate them into goals that meant success for the group (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Elmore, 2000; Spillane, 1999; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Sykes, 1996).

In learning enriched schools compared to learning impoverished schools, teachers and principals collaborate to achieve shared goals (Rosenholtz, 1998; Louis and Miles, 1990; Goodlad, 1984; Little, 1982; Lortie, 1975). Significant educational change consisting of a change in beliefs and teaching style can only come about through the process of personal development within the social context. When teachers are able to trust, value and legitimize their joint experience they are more likely to try new things again as career long demands occur (Fullan, 2001). As a principal, it is very important to nurture those critical ideals so that teachers can be willing to address the next set of issues that arise.

The stories of Carol also illustrate that one style of leadership doesn't always address every situation that arises. During the Learning Walk, teachers needed a

principal who was a learner but when Carol tried to defend a less than adequate lesson, a principal who was authoritative and willing to hold up the standards of learning was needed. Management is the designing and carrying out of plans, getting things done, and working effectively with people. Leadership deals with vision, direction and inspiration. Both functions of the principalship must be blended or attended to for a school to see success (Louis and Miles, 1990). Effective principals like effective teachers can display a variety of styles but all must be overtly channeled to the process of affecting change.

What one essentially believes or values drives their actions (Sergiovanni, 2000, 1999; Deal & Peterson, 1999; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Kouzes & Posner, 1993; Fullan, 1993). As I shared with Carol, I believed that every day should hold expert instruction for children. Carol knew that I was willing to back up those words as she had seen in my work to remove Ms. Brown. What I was saying were not simply words of the moment, but rather beliefs I was willing to take action on. Taking a stand on inadequate pedagogy is certainly complex. There comes a time where a decision has to be made regarding the likelihood that an adult will acquire the needed skills for the classroom. While working to improve people is always the best solution, there sometimes comes a point where that can't be done. Kouzes and Posner (1993) note that people want credibility from their leaders more than any other single value.

Credible leaders are reported to demonstrate the courage of conviction "they must have the boldness to communicate reality honestly to their constituents" (Kouzes & Posner, 1993, p. 28). Carol liked and demanded the high expectations when they were for Ms. Brown but she didn't want them when they were for her. As a leader,



affirmation, appreciation and acceptance of others is needed to gain respect. Yet integrity and a passion for what is right is also important. People need to see that their leaders have the knowledge and skill to lead and are not afraid to do so. A leader needs to be believable and that happens when one “does what they say they will do” (Kouzes & Posner, 1993, p. 47). All this makes leadership very complicated and a struggle on a daily basis.

The stories of the coaches illustrate how using expert teachers who have been especially trained can provide ongoing sustained support to staff and students. Improvement is only a function of doing what is needed within your particular context (Fullan, 2001). Traditional workshops, conferences and staff development had not provided the ongoing sustained support needed by Jefferson School teachers. If achievement was to climb, teachers needed to develop standards of practice that were agreed upon. The naming of coaches in reading and math who could work with teachers to develop these skills was the initial step. Because coaches were peers, the model provided a safe environment for teachers to learn together (Neufeld & Roper, 2003).

As the stories in this section reveal, principal leadership is critical in the implementation of any program even if it involves peers. In schools where there is little principal support, coaches describe their role as “frustrating” and “disempowering” (Neufeld & Roper, 2003, p. 24). Coaches report that it is very hard to implement their work without principal involvement, even if there is teacher buy-in. People ascertain from their leader what they value by the way he/she allocates their time (Deal & Peterson, 1999). By pushing into classes and spending time with Ted and Paulette teachers

could see that I believed that the work they were doing in literacy and math was important. This time with the coaches was also a good way to pull ideas. The plan to let Cathy watch Holly teach her lessons first was developed as we met together and visited first grades.

The stories of Ted and Paulette also illuminate some of the district politics that impact a reform effort. The other principals in the district clearly did not want me to get what they perceived as the best coaches. Coaches in other buildings didn't want our coaches to be doing more work than them. During times of pressure, it frequently becomes challenging to stay focused on the reform. DuFour and Eaker note that it is critical to "not pay too much attention to resisters" (p.188) or to "vilify" them. Fullan (1995) encourages leaders to "ride the paradox" by "focusing on the future but remaining grounded in the present" (p.705). As a principal, many things will be out of ones' control. The human side of leadership frequently pulls a leader to frustration or anger.

As a leader, it is easy to be distracted by some of the competing issues that arise within a school. Those are times when principals most need to do hold onto their vision of what is right for their building (Sergiovanni, 2004, 1999, 1996, 1992; Deal & Peterson, 1994; Kouses & Posner, 1993; Fullan, 2001). Getting the coaches I wanted was not as important as getting good people who could develop into what we needed. Getting good results from kids who could make quick gains was not as important as making gains for all. Those were some of the difficult decisions for which there were no quick or easy solutions.

And frequently, when making difficult decisions such as these, leaders stand alienated from others. As the stories capture, young people like Jen, Mandy, Ted and Paulette learned that sometimes excellence has a price. They found that frequently innovators find themselves in a lonely place especially when they begin to initiate change. But when their teaching and leadership begins to make a difference, making a difference felt good. When teachers saw gains in DIBELS, PSSA and curriculum-based assessments, they saw the impact of their hard work. And then when those successes were shared with others, the success became contagious. Watching teachers grow in their craft was a source of great joy for me.

These individual stories illustrate that real change in schools occurs at many levels but perhaps, none more powerful than at the student-teacher level. Each day at Jefferson School, I privately winced through teachers' struggles and publicly danced through their successes. From my three-year period, as the building principal, I learned that there is amazing potential in almost any teacher and any child. Carol Thomlinson (1999) notes that authentic learning happens within people and not to them. Teachers, students and the principal at Jefferson School were certainly no exception.

## **PART 3: Reclaiming the turf...the stories of LaQuanna, Ms. Cox, and Ana...developing a child-centered organization behind the city streets**

### **Key Moments with LaQuanna**

*During my first experience with LaQuanna, I had to put my knee on her elbow and pin it to the ground while pulling her long graceful fingers off of Markita's neck. I had never seen a child so angry and I wondered if the choking would have ever stopped if I hadn't intervened. I never got the whole story from LaQuanna but the other kids told me she was the brunt of teasing again. LaQuanna was always a scapegoat. She was rough looking, dirty and willing to scrap with anyone. Boys and girls alike egged her on for what was always a dramatic event. LaQuanna stared at me with a hard look on her face and total disrespect when I told her I was the principal at Jefferson School now. I told her that the fighting was going to stop. People were not going to call her names at my school. But if anyone did, it would be me and not her that would take care of them. That was clearly something LaQuanna didn't like...*

*...several weeks later, I got to know LaQuanna again. At the end of the day, she and her animated little first grade sister were left after school. The girls' mom, who was known on the streets as a high rolling prostitute and drug pusher, hadn't come to pick the girls up. Her cell phone wasn't working and the girls were locked out of the house. I fed them pretzels and drinks and asked them if they wanted to help me do office work. I had handouts for the teachers for grade level meetings and I needed them collated, stapled and put into the teachers' boxes. The girls eagerly said they'd help. LaQuanna was a quick study. Her long graceful fingers moved quickly and she had the job done in no time. I hugged her and told her how nice it was that she helped me and what a great job she had done. After that, LaQuanna would frequently stop down at the end of the day to see if I needed any other work done. I began to leave things for her to do and she and her sister became my frequent after-school companions...*

*...right before Christmas, I decided to have a breakfast for teachers. I asked LaQuanna and her sister if they would want to come a little earlier in the morning and help me with the party. As I drove up to Jefferson School in the pitch dark, both girls were at my doorstep. They were clean for once, had on dresses and LaQuanna had braided their hair. I squealed in delight, hugged them, told them how pretty they were and we got to work. They helped me bring in all the supplies, set the tables and serve the teachers. At the end of the day, LaQuanna came back to see if I needed help loading the car. As we were in the parking lot, she tapped me on the shoulder to get my attention. In a soft faint voice, she*

*looked at me with those big brown eyes that had begun to find a soft spot in me and revealed, "Mrs. Amato, you're the only person who's ever called me pretty." I squeezed her dark rough face and said, "Well then, my dear LaQuanna, I'll forever remember this wonderful moment as belonging to me." ...*

*...in the spring one day, LaQuanna was helping me to stuff the teachers' mailboxes and she began to limp. I asked her if she was hurt and she said no it's just that her shoes were too tight. I looked down and couldn't believe I hadn't noticed them before. They were torn, filthy and obviously not a fit any more. I thought about my own kids and their grandparents who get them new shoes when the shoestrings fray. I called LaQuanna's mother and asked her if the girls could come home with me for awhile. As a treat for all their hard work, I'd take them to get new shoes. Their mom was thrilled and we made plans to meet later. On the way home, I had to stop for gasoline. My cell phone rang and I told LaQuanna she could answer; that it was probably Mr. Amato wondering where we were. In a few minutes, LaQuanna came out to the gas pump with a look of horror on her face. "Mrs. Amato, is Mr. Amato white?" she asked. Not even thinking, I said almost nonchalantly, "Um..hum..". "But...Mrs. Amato", LaQuanna choked, "I'm afraid of white people." I looked up and said, "That can't be so LaQuanna...I'm white and you aren't afraid of me, are you?" She suddenly broke into a smile and looked very relieved. "Okay... if you're white, I guess I'm not afraid of white people." What a fun evening I had with those two. Laquanna chose black NIKE shoes and her sister picked out pink and white ones that lit up when she stamped her feet. They were so proud of their shoes on Monday....*

*...one day, Josephine came running for me, yelling, "It's your girl, LaQuanna. You better get out to the play yard fast." I wasn't even out of the door when I recognized the voice, wailing at the top of its lungs. I ran over as fast as I could and saw LaQuanna hunched down, crying and shaking. I pulled her up and said sternly, "LaQuanna, were you fighting again?" She shook her head, the words barely coming out between the loud and dramatic sobs. "She called me an ugly bit#\*...and I really wanted to hurt her but I just didn't want you to be disappointed in me." I held her in my arms thinking how I had jumped to conclusions, too...and how the children never ceased to teach me...*

## **Key Moments with Ms. Cox**

*...it was a Friday afternoon at 4PM and the end of my third day in Fairfield. School had finished at 2:45. I had cleaned off my desktop exhausted from my first partial week. My son played college soccer at a nearby university and I was going to try to beat the rush hour traffic and watch the second half... The phone rang and I immediately answered to what was a voice of hysteria. It was Ms. Cox. Her third grade daughter, Sarah, rode the Special Education van and she had not gotten off. Where was she? I told her who I was and that I was new to the district. I said I hadn't met any of the transportation*

people yet but I would call and see what I could find out. She wasn't hearing any of it. She began to unleash a string of profanities. How could a principal not know where her child was?? I was in charge. I should know everything and at all times. I told her I was a principal for eight years before coming to Jefferson School and on occasion, something like this happened. I had never lost a child yet. They were always somewhere. I told Ms. Cox I needed to make some calls and I would get back to her. She wasn't happy but I ended the call. I tried the superintendent's office, the bus company, my secretary's cell phone and the teacher's home number. No one was answering on a Friday afternoon. In a little while, Ms. Cox called back to see what I found out. I had to tell her I was still trying to get a hold of people. The profanity escalated. Ms. Cox was sure her daughter was kidnapped and in another state by now, and if that were the case, I would be personally responsible. Miraculously, I was able to get a hold of the teacher's aide in the special education room. She thought she heard Sarah say she was going to her cousins' house. At the same time, the bus company called. The driver said he dropped Sarah off at her cousin's house because she had a note from her dad to do that. I called back Ms. Cox who hadn't talked to Sarah's dad yet. She called the cousin's house and Sarah was there. Needless to say...I didn't get to see any soccer that day... but I was happy that the student was found- safe and sound. On Monday, Ms. Cox was on the phone at 9AM. She said she wanted to apologize, that the misunderstanding had been her husband's fault. I told her I accepted her apology but I hadn't taken her comments personally. I knew they were the raw emotions of a mother who didn't know where her daughter was. She said she hoped we could start over. I told her I thought that was a great idea...

...about a month later, Ms. Cox called and asked if she could come in and see me. She said she had a problem that she needed me to help with because she didn't want to get angry and blow up. She said she knew that I knew how she could get when she was angry. When Ms. Cox arrived, she said she had talked to Sarah's speech teacher earlier in the day after she got a progress report. She said Sarah was struggling with her speech and now that she was in third grade, she was becoming self-conscious about it. Ms. Cox said speech was an issue with Sarah's dad. He was originally from Puerto Rico but came to the states in grade school and felt that language had held him back. Ms. Cox was a biracial American who also felt that sometimes her language skills interfered with her communication and she didn't want that for Sarah. She said when she talked to the speech therapist about possibly giving Sarah more time, the teacher got defensive. I told her I'd look into the matter and get back to her. When I went to visit the speech class, it felt like a flashback to the past. Rather than working on authentic speech, the therapist was using antiquated articulation techniques and very little else. I set up a time to meet with her and presented to her an overview of the speech support program I had worked with before I came to Fairfield. I suggested she visit a speech class in another district and see how many speech therapists were using an inclusive model these days to work with kids in authentic settings. She agreed and really enjoyed her visit. She even signed up for additional staff training through the Intermediate Unit and the Department of Special Education. However, when it was time to begin pushing in, she was a little

*reluctant because she wasn't sure about her peers. I told her I'd address the speech support at our next faculty meeting. Teachers were very accepting because we were beginning to move towards more inclusion in other areas, as well. As the changes were initiated, Ms. Cox was so pleased that she even warmed up to the speech teacher. Sarah could frequently be seen carrying candy and baked goods into school on speech days and the speech teacher could be seen carrying them out...*

*...one day, Ms. Cox didn't call first. LaKeisha came in and said she thought I should see Ms. Cox right away. Ms. Cox was visibly shaken. She said Sarah had come home and said the teacher had told her in front of the class, "And Sarah, tomorrow can you ease up on that cheap perfume? We were all sick today." Ms. Cox was livid. The perfume was Victoria's Secret and it wasn't cheap, she said. She said they took pride in Sarah's appearance and bought her nice clothes and other things sacrificing what they might spend on themselves. Besides, she wondered, why would a teacher embarrass and humiliate a child? She demanded that Sarah be removed from the room. I told her to let me talk to the teacher first. When I did, the teacher admitted to the comment. She was a second year teacher and was expecting. The room was warm and the scent had gotten to her and she hadn't thought about how she might have handled that so the child wouldn't be embarrassed. She said she liked Sarah and her mom. Sarah was also doing really well with this teacher because she was one of the teachers who really accommodated well and worked nicely with the Learning Support staff. I asked her if she'd be willing to meet with Sarah and her mom and apologize. She agreed and was very gracious. I told Ms. Cox I'd like to give the teacher a second chance because we all sometimes say things we don't mean. Ms. Cox looked at me and said, "I guess I have to...you gave me another chance, Mrs. Amato"...*

*...one October Saturday, we had a fall festival. I took my dad to Jefferson School with me because after the festival we were going to a Pitt football game. There were many parents who came to the festival and I began to introduce some of them to him. When I got to Ms. Cox, she began to tell my dad how I had transformed the school. She said it was just like Oz. Everything was dark because wicked people had been in charge. Then I landed in a bubble of smiles and just like Glinda brought good things to the children. She said they had dances, and activities and were treated well and not screamed at. My dad told Ms. Cox that he thought that if my job was ever in jeopardy, I should take her to testify in my behalf. She hugged him and said she'd camp out at the administration office if my job was ever in jeopardy. I laughed and told her I liked her much better as a supporter than as an adversary...*

## **Key Moments with Ana**

*...at the end of my first year, the Pitt team got together to brainstorm about the upcoming year. We talked about using an intern principal to help in the office and also to begin to mold as a future leader for the district at large. Ana was an excellent first grade teacher who was working on her principal*

certification at Pitt. I really didn't know her well but others did and thought she'd be a strong candidate. I had worked with intern principals before coming to Fairfield and had enjoyed the experience so I agreed to have her join me at the school. We went through what seemed like months of protocol to get Ana a leave from her classroom. Finally, when deciding where to put her, I had just reconfigured the offices and used all the small rooms so I moved a desk in with me. Sharing the office as well as the leadership role at Jefferson School would be an exciting venture...

...not long after Ana arrived, Trevor, a little second grader was restrained and carried into the office by security. From the security guard's quick report and the under-the-breath comments from LaKeisha, I knew Ms. Hightower had pushed Trevor's buttons. I told the guard she could set Trevor down on the chair in the front of my desk. When I came to Jefferson School, I brought two things from my previous school- my black leather chair and my beta fish. From my classroom days, I always had a fish at school. I really liked what kids could learn from a classroom pet. But since becoming a principal, I discovered, quite by accident, another benefit of the fish. If I sat an angry child or parent in front of the fish and waited a few minutes, writing or straightening up the desk, they would frequently follow the movement of the fish and forget about their anger. However, on this particular day, the fish trick wasn't working. Trevor was screaming, yelling, kicking and having a major meltdown. He looked up at me, then at Ana, crossed his arms and screamed, "I hate you." "I hate her." "And I'm gonna kill that fish." I totally ignored the fish comment, dialed home, gave mom a quick update, and put Trevor on the phone. Within **seconds** he was saying, "I'm sorry, Ms. Amato" "I'm sorry Ms. Rooney." I looked over at Ana whose eyes were dancing with laughter. I knew if she saw humor in this situation, a great partnership was in the making...

...at the Governor's Academy on Urban Education, a consortium was formed for principals who work in urban settings. I would try to go the meetings in Harrisburg when I could because the topics were specific to urban schools and since I had not come up through an urban system, I was up for learning as much as I could from other experts. Ana said she'd be interested in going with me, so I included her in the next meeting. The daytime event centered on looking at data and we both enjoyed the session. That night, we went out for dinner with the other principals. As the evening progressed, people began to share anecdotes of their year. One principal completely shocked us by saying that she called the police for an acting out child and when the police arrived, she pinched the child so the child would scream and the police would take her. Another principal said she had her secretary let people registering for class know that the school was designated as "persistently dangerous" so new people would be encouraged to go elsewhere. Ana and I talked that night and during many, many others about our urban population. We shared a belief that students should be valued and respected. We talked daily about how to make that the reality of Jefferson School. In this particular setting, it was so wonderful to have someone in a role other than a teacher, to share ideas with...



*...during our second year together, Ana was hired by the district as the assistant principal and I became the principal of two buildings. An intern was hired for the second building and I traveled back and forth. My last day in Fairfield, the day after school was out, was a day I spent with Ana. We went to lunch at our favorite local diner. We talked about the years we spent together- the long hours- desk to desk, frequently working days longer than ten hours. We talked about how difficult the position was – many times so many interruptions there was no time for a lunch or bathroom break. We talked about all the rich professional development with the Pitt team, the IFL, the RAC and other professionals and how that made us grow as leaders. We also laughed thinking about all the personalities and situations that kept us entertained. We both agreed and verbalized that the time we spent in Fairfield was much more than a job- it was a calling, of sorts...a way to bring a caring education and hope to some of our region's most economically disadvantaged kids. And we talked about finding support in each other and how we were of different generations but of one spirit and soul... but mostly, we said how rich our lives had become because of the experience...and how our hearts would always hold a place for the children of Jefferson School....*

### **Interpreting the Key Moments- Part 3**

At an early age, many students who live in urban areas and attend urban schools have been introduced to oppression, racism and poverty (Sirin et. al., 2004). These are barriers that shape the way students see themselves and affect their readiness to learn. Frequently students from poverty have a low self-concept and few aspirations for their future (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2007). For them, school is not something important that they see meeting current or future needs. In addition, there is a considerable mismatch between acceptable behaviors within the school walls and behaviors needed to survive on the streets beyond the school walls (Crosby, 1999; Payne, 1998; Tyak & Cuban, 1995).

There have always been students in schools who do not fit the dominant patterns of success. Because of their cultural, social and economic influences, these students come to school with challenging behaviors (Senge et. al., 2000; Payne, 1998; Tyak &

Cuban, 1995). At Jefferson School, reflective of the surrounding community, many children came with issues resulting from living in high levels of poverty.

For me, as the principal, getting the staff at large to look beyond the anger and dysfunction of some of our most difficult children was a challenge. As was typical of traditional schools, Jefferson School had developed a system of sorting and classification (Senge et. al., 1999; Goodlad, 1984; Lortie, 1975). Students like LaQuanna were pushed to the bottom of the pile. At the core of the system was the notion that somehow the child was to blame for his/her problems and little could be done by the system to rectify them. More time and resources would go to the children without issues who come to school wanting to take advantage of the education adults were providing. (Senge et. al., 2000; Senge et. al., 1999; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

Under the child-centered model, this would not be the case. Building a caring learning community would mean recognizing that many children were struggling with issues that kept them from being classroom ready (Senge et. al., 2000, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1999; Thomlinson, 1999). As a group of educators, we would need to work to create confidence and self-esteem with children, both important if we would want them to open themselves to the risks one faces as a learner. Senge (2000) notes that in a child-centered school “seeing students for who they are” (p. 121) and “educating from a sense of dignity” (p. 122) means taking the time to get to know them. When that occurs, schools can begin to work from students’ strengths and be cognizant of their limits. As the stories of LaQuana illustrate, beyond the façade of a very angry young girl, was a fragile human child craving time and attention. As her basic emotional

needs were met, she was able to put aside behaviors that were keeping her from learning and become a vital part of the learning community.

In addition to the fact that LaQuana came from poverty, she also came from a household of violence. LaQuana 's father was serving a ten-year sentence for armed robbery. Her brother had been through the juvenile system for the possession of a weapon and her mother had also been jailed for minor criminal accounts. This was not at all unusual for the children at Jefferson School who lived in a community of violence. Markita, the student LaQuana was in a fight with, was a victim of violence, as well. The previous year, her mother was strangled to death by her father with the vacuum cord during a domestic dispute.

The National Center for Children Exposed to Violence (2005) reports that children who are victims of violence may experience increased depression, anxiety, and anger. These children are also at increased risk of becoming violent themselves. As a school, it would be important for us to provide models for students in the ways to operate without violence. Reading and math would only be a part of the total education that students would need from us. Children in the Fairfield community frequently lived with the dysfunction associated with poverty. They had parents working several jobs or worse yet, making a living through illegal or unethical means. Many were the products of teen pregnancies and were being raised by grandparents. Students frequently came to school hungry and reported that they hadn't eaten since lunch the previous day. Children had little stimulation at home. They had little access to computers or books. They frequently said they had no one at home to help with schoolwork. I remember one occasion where a second grader was sent to the office by an angry teacher because he

was sleeping in class. When I asked him a few questions about the day before, he revealed that the police had been to his house until three in the morning and he was afraid to go to sleep. After a short nap in the office, he was ready to return and do his work. As a school, we would need to recognize that life for our students was hard and frequently intervention delivered with compassion was needed from us.

As the principal, my level of engagement with the students frequently brought mixed reaction from the staff. Teachers who were also forming relationships with students applauded my efforts. Others frequently commented that I was not authoritative enough. They believed that children should be afraid to go to the principal's office. As a leader, one's values shape an individual's behavior. (Sergiovanni, 2004, 1996, 1992; Barth, 2003; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Kouzes & Posner, 1993). I believed it was much more effective to have children and adults listen out of respect than fear. When LaQuanna revealed that she didn't want to fight because she didn't want to disappoint me, I was pleased that our relationship had survived such a hard test.

I also knew that if we were ever to be genuinely effective with our students, we would need to go beyond the school walls and work with families and the community. The optimal learning environment for children involves a close collaboration of school and family. In a child-centered environment this is thought of as a partnership which implies that each side has something to give (Barth, 2003; Senge et. al., 2000; Deal & Peterson, 1999; DuFour & Eaker, 1998). While educators have expertise in pedagogy and content, parents are experts in the specific knowledge of specific children.

When schools and parents collaborate, they are able to identify and work through solutions to barriers that each may face. Schools become a resource for teachers and families- a place where they can work together to learn more about each other. The National PTA notes that schools can be more productive as partners by establishing regular, meaningful two-way conversations (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). The stories of Ms. Cox illustrate how a mother, who did not have a natural collegial personality, could develop a relationship with school people that went beyond mere acceptance and moved to a higher one of support. Part of that might have been that she felt her concerns were being addressed and her daughter's needs were being met. DuFour and Eaker (1998) suggest that school staff sometimes can benefit from viewing parents as customers and assessing their level of satisfaction similar to the way businesses do.

When this occurs, a parent's satisfaction with school frequently results in increased satisfaction for the student, which is reflected in student attitude towards school and learning (Barth, 2003; Senge et. al., 2000; DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Parents need to feel that there is a process in place, which welcomes their issues and concerns and allows them to appeal decisions. As a leader that task often becomes complicated. Teachers frequently expect all their decisions to stand. Parents expect decisions to be overturned. Again, in a child-centered school the decision chosen becomes what impact the outcome will have on the child in the immediate and future term (Sergiovanni, 2004, 1999, 1992; Senge et. al., 2000).

As the story with the speech therapist illustrates, frequently people need exposed to alternatives. Because of the structure of schooling, many techniques and strategies continue to be used because in the absence of new ideas, old ones prevail (Senge et.

al., 1999; Goodlad, 1984; Lortie, 1975). Leadership is frequently needed to encourage people to explore new ways of thinking and to grow professionally throughout ones career.

The same cultural elements that bring meaning inside a school also convey a positive image externally. Often administrators and teachers stereotype parents as apathetic or lazy. In actuality, many parents value an education for their child but feel unwanted, unwelcome or unsure of how to approach school staff (Barth, 2003; Deal & Peterson, 1999, 1994; DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Once welcomed, even parents like Ms. Cox can become advocates for their children and the school.

Finally, the stories in Part 3 illustrate how important it is for leaders to also be nurtured in a child-centered school. Schon and Arygris (1978) describe analytical reflection as “double-loop” learning. That occurs when people reconsider their basic assumptions, reconnect to new possible approaches and reframe whether or not new guiding ideas are needed. As the principal, sometimes one holds onto information that can’t be readily shared because it’s confidential or legally not possible. In those cases, leadership may need to override team or group decisions. Having someone like Ana in the office that was present to talk things over was invaluable to me. Sometimes just restating why a decision was made or why a certain approach was needed brought clarity to my thinking and reaffirmed for me why I choose certain behaviors.

When educational practice is informed by critical reflection, a question arises concerning the reason behind schooling (Sergiovanni, 1995). If school leaders believe that their goal is to educate all children for the responsibilities of citizenship in the global world, then leadership becomes a moral and intellectual practice as well as one of craft.

This leadership by “purposing” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 129) or “transformational” leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000, p. 129) draws attention to the core purposes and reasons for educational organizations.

Frequently, as the stories reflected, many systems are organized to only teach the motivated, compliant or otherwise agreeable students (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Thomlinson, 1999; Senge et. al., 1999; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Sergiovanni, 1992). Those who present as difficult or unmotivated, fall under practices that separate and limit their access to curriculum or services that the more educable students get. Yet, one day these difficult students will be living among us in a community they have not been able to be a part of.

As schools, we need to think about what our responsibilities are for students. Do all students deserve the same future? Or do the harder to teach among us get less? Thinking about our values and ultimately issues like equity and social justice impacted day-to-day decisions. As the stories illustrate, when staff began to problem solve together values came to the table and could be challenged. Rather than putting down barriers, new avenues could be opened to reach those who needed extra help. Instead of putting the blame on children for their issues, problem solving about how to work harder and smarter to meet their needs occurred. And we reached out to parents, the children’s first teachers, regardless of circumstance.

Teachers are frequently caught up in the moment – gathering materials, taking attendance, or preparing for lessons. Those activities sometimes allow little time for the deep reflection about what it is that they do. Often, principals have to call the attention from the mundane to the important. Deciding when, where and how to interject these

essential questions into a building's routine is critical. At Jefferson School, I started out small- one child at a time, then we could move to small groups and the group at large.

A leader also needs time for self reflection (Barth, 2003; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Covey, 1989). I was happy to have Ana, the Pitt team and colleagues from my previous practices to talk to about my impressions and questions related to leading during change. Leaders can get their inspiration from a variety of sources. As the stories illustrate, feedback from parents such as Ms. Cox or from students such as LaQuanna let a leader know that their efforts are impacting others. Sometimes even a small rather insignificant moment will provide the strength for more difficult times or a larger decision.

Early on, when I first came to Jefferson School, the level of undermining and pushback from senior staff was overwhelming. When I had turned in my resignation at my former district to come to Jefferson School, the school board there came to me and said they had liked my work and didn't want me to leave. They asked if I would rescind the letter of resignation and take a leave of absence instead. My principalship there would be held for a year and if at any time, I decided Jefferson School wasn't for me, I could return. In December of 2003, I began thinking about returning to my former district. I was feeling like I was working so hard and that nothing I was doing was really making a difference. But, very early one dark morning when I entered the building, the lunch ladies pulled me into the kitchen as they were preparing breakfast. They were community members – aunts, grandmothers and neighbors of the children. They told me that they could see and hear what I was doing and they were grateful. They said they felt there was finally hope for the children they loved – that they would be educated



and cared for at Jefferson School. They also said they could see what the others were doing and it was the work of the devil. They gave me a brown-faced angel for my desk, and they each kissed me on the cheek.

I resigned from my former position two weeks later. Although I felt that what I was experiencing was a resistance to change rather than any form of evil, like the lunch ladies, I believed that my values and experience had something to offer Jefferson School. I was certain that there were plenty of competent people to take my place in the suburbs. I also knew that in urban settings, experience is very hard to come by (Kozol, 2005; Orr et. al., 2005; Crosby, 1999; Tyak & Cuban, 1995). Leaders, like teachers and students, must make a connection to their environment. Particularly in challenging settings, the principalship isn't a mere job. As the stories note, a deep commitment to working in unsettled environments is needed. Jefferson School, complete with all its issues and problems, had pulled me in and made the opportunity to lead one that I will always value and cherish.

## CHAPTER 5: THE CONTEXT CHANGED

### Introduction

The Jefferson School that I left at the end of my three-year stay in Fairfield looked very different than the Jefferson School I entered in 2003. From my lens as the building principal, there were several changes in the context that I believe to be significant.

Within this chapter, I will describe some of those changes. Throughout the description, I will reference exhibits which can be found in the appendices in this study. These exhibits come from a variety of sources such as emails, newspaper articles and handwritten notes. They are not presented to be the voice of authority. Rather, their purpose is to provide the specific descriptive details that make a narrative account able to be relived in the mind of the reader. A table that summarizes the exhibits is listed below for the reader's convenience. A brief description, explanation and date is listed for each exhibit.

**Table 2 Context Exhibits**

| <b>Exhibit No.</b> | <b>Exhibit Name</b>                 | <b>Description</b>                                       | <b>Type</b> | <b>Source</b> | <b>Date</b> |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|--|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| A.1                | District Survey                     | School Improvement survey                                | survey      | survey        | 6/01/05     |
| A.2                | Jefferson Elementary Teacher Survey | survey given to teachers at the close of the school year | survey      | survey        | 6/01/04     |
| A.3                | Jefferson Elementary Student Survey | survey given to students at the close of the school year | survey      | survey        | 6/01/04     |
| A.4                | Jefferson Elementary Parent Survey  | survey given to parents at the close of the school year  | survey      | survey        | 6/01/04     |

|      |                                   |  |                                   |                          |          |
|------|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| B.1  | Teacher Correspondence            | note from teacher reflecting climate   | letter                            | teacher                  | 11/08/03 |
| B.2  | Email                             | note from teacher reflecting climate   | email                             | teacher                  | 10/03/03 |
| B.3  | Teacher Note                      | note asking to help a fellow teacher   | teacher note                      | teacher                  | 11/21/04 |
| B.4  | Email                             | note from teacher reflecting climate   | email                             | teacher                  | 9/30/04  |
| B.5  | Email                             | note reflecting teacher participation  | email                             | teacher                  | 3/07/06  |
| B.6  | Student Data Summary              | chart reflecting "Data Day" summary  | teacher chart                     | grade 5 team             | 10/15/04 |
| B.7  | Grade Level Meeting Summary       | example of minutes from grade level meeting                                      | meeting minutes                   | grade 6 team             | 11/30/04 |
| B.8  | Grade Level Meeting Agenda        | example of minutes from grade level meeting                                      | meeting minutes                   | grade 2 team             | 11/03/04 |
| B.9  | Data Summary                      | sample data reflecting growth in students in reading and math                    | district 4Sight report            | district report          | 5/24/06  |
| B.10 | Learning Walk Notes               | example of notes from Learning Walk  | Learning Walk feedback sheets     | grade 1 team             | 3/09/05  |
| B.11 | Learning Walk Notes               | sample of self reflection and peer reflection sheets from Learning Walks         | Learning Walk feedback sheets     | grade 2 team             | 12/07/05 |
| B.12 | Balanced Literacy Poster          | poster developed for intense focus in literacy                                   | classroom poster                  | Governor's Academy team  | 9/06/04  |
| B.13 | Balanced Literacy Notetaking Form | sample of peer feedback sheet for collegial visits in literacy                   | peer feedback sheet               | teacher                  | 1/26/05  |
| B.14 | Parent Night Packet               | packet of sign- in sheets, agenda and parent resources for parent literacy night | sign- in, agenda, parent handouts | grade 1 team             | 11/16/04 |
| B.15 | Email                             | email regarding project with DeLoitte-Touche                                     | email                             | community contact person | 09/08/04 |
| B.16 | Email                             | email regarding project with DeLoitte-Touche                                     | email                             | community contact person | 09/17/04 |
| B.17 | Newspaper Article                 | newspaper article summarizing project with DeLoitte-Touche                       | newspaper article                 | Pittsburgh Post-Gazette  | 6/1/05   |
| B.18 | Child Study Notes                 | example of work with children at risk  | Child Study notes                 | Child Study Coordinator  | 1/04/05  |
| B.19 | Child Study Report                | example of interventions done for a single child by team of experts              | Child Study case review           | Child Study Coordinator  | 1/04/05  |
| B.20 | Behavioral Support Framework      | framework for school-wide behavior program                                       | behavioral support poster         | Governor's Academy       | 6/20/04  |
| B.21 | Core Team Minutes                 | minutes from behavioral core team work   | meeting minutes                   | office files             | 4/06/04  |

|       |   |   |                                       |                       |                      |
|-------|---|---|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| B.22  | Buildingwide Behavior Plan                    | school-wide positive behavior support plan drafted by the core team | expected behavior list                | Core Behavior Team    | 8/27/04              |
| B.23  | Positive Behavior Support Program             | schoolwide positive behavior plan drafted by core team              | reward/consequence program guidelines | Core Behavior Team    | 8/27/04              |
| B.24  | Problem Solving Worksheet                     | student conferencing sheet  | reward program summary                | Core Behavior Team    | 8/27/04              |
| B.25  | Governor's Academy Behavioral Support Program | presentation viewed by Governor's Academy team                      | PowerPoint                            | Governor's Academy    | 6/20/04              |
| B.26  | Note from Student                             | example of restorative justice                                      | student note                          | student               | 1/14/05              |
| B.27  | Office Referrals by Class                     | tally of office referrals   | summary sheet                         | office files          | 11/04/04             |
| B.28  | Student Behavior Survey                       | sample of teacher rating scale for student behaviors                | checklist                             | teacher               | 5/17/04              |
| B. 29 | Behavioral Specialist Survey                  | example of feedback from teachers                                   | survey                                | behavioral specialist | 9/22/04              |
| B.30  | Coaching Notes                                | sample of notes from behavioral specialist to teacher               | notes                                 | behavioral specialist |                      |
| B.31  | Behavioral Specialist Proposal                | proposal for work with behavioral specialist                        | email                                 | behavioral specialist | 9/22/04              |
| B.32  | Student Discipline Guidelines                 | new building procedures developed by Core Team                      | guidelines                            | office files          | 8/27/04              |
| B.33  | Monthly Suspension Data                       | tally sheets reviewed with Core Team                                | records                               | office files          | 9/03-9/04            |
| B.34  | Yearly Suspension Data                        | bar graphs of suspension by year reviewed with Core Team            | records                               | office files          | 03-04 to 04-05       |
| B.35  | Discipline Data                               | sample of record keeping for Jefferson Star behavior rewards        | discipline files                      | office files          | 10/01/04 to 10/30/05 |
| B.36  | Student Council Activities                    | Student Council calendar  | calendar                              | sponsor               | 1/3/05               |
| B.37  | Building Activities Calendar                  | example of monthly activities for parents and students              | calendar                              | office files          | 1/01/05              |
| B.38  | Email   | email to teachers regarding basketball team                         | email                                 | coach                 | 12/03/04             |
| B.39  | Parental Involvement Policy                   | copy of parental involvement policy                                 | policy                                | Title I               | 9/01/04              |
| B.40  | Student Program Notice                        | invitation to parent program  | invitation                            | office files          | 2/25/05              |
| B.41  | Student Program Notice                        | invitation to parent program  | invitation                            | office files          | 12/13/04             |
| B.42  | Email   | PTA notice  | email                                 | office                | 11/2/04              |

|      |                                     |  |                   |                            |          |
|------|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------|----------------------------|----------|
| B.43 | Email                               | PTA notice   | email             | office                     | 11/9/04  |
| B.44 | Conference Notice                   | letter home to parents                                 | letter            | office files               | 11/02/04 |
| B.45 | Teacher Note                        | note that reflects positive communication with parents | note              | teacher                    | 3/17/05  |
| B.46 | Email                               | example of partnering with community                   | email             | social worker              | 9/29/04  |
| B.47 | Newspaper Article                   | example of partnering with the community               | newspaper article | Pittsburgh Post-Gazette    | 9/02/04  |
| B.48 | Email                               | example of partnering with community                   | email             | social worker              | 12/01/04 |
| B.49 | Newspaper Article                   | example of partnering with Pittsburgh Symphony         | newspaper article | Pittsburgh Post-Gazette    | 9/16/04  |
| B.50 | Email                               | example of partnering with Pittsburgh Symphony         | email             | teacher                    | 11/12/04 |
| B.51 | Student Program Notice              | example of partnering with Gateway to the Arts         | notice            | Gateway to the Arts packet | 1/4/05   |
| B.52 | Pitt Student Packet                 | information for Pitt students                          | student packet    | packet                     | 9/15/04  |
| B.53 | District Magazine Article           | sample from a district publication                     | article           | article                    | 9/06/05  |
| C.1  | Distinguished Educators Report 2005 | report issued by PDE Distinguished Educators           | report            | report                     | 11/15/05 |
| C.2  | School Improvement Plan 2000        | school district Improvement Plan                       | report            | report                     | 12/20/00 |
| C.3  | Building Improvement Plan 2004      | building Improvement Plan 2004                         | report            | report                     | 11/19/04 |

## A Spirit of Community

Once defined by closed doors, hostility, turnover and high rates of absenteeism, as the staff was encouraged to work together a sharing of ideas, engagement and spirit of teamwork emerged. When teachers became involved in the decision-making process, they were forced to work together. From this work, staff began to view each other in new ways. Rather than simply being the person next door, peers became valuable colleagues holding the means to reverse the cycle of failure and negativity. Working through problems was not always simple or linear, but staff came to learn that

in such a needy community, if they would ban together rather than face off with each other they could individually and collectively make a difference (Marris, 2001; Senge et. al., 2000, 1999; Fullan, 1999; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Schon, 1987).

Teachers discovered what a support they could be for each other. Instead of simply punching in and out, closing their classroom doors and fending for themselves, as they had in the past, teachers began to collaborate on a daily basis. You could now see them coming early, staying late, gathering in the hallways and visiting in each others rooms to exchange ideas and materials.

After Gail and I had the luncheon for the duty teachers, I began to host other luncheons and breakfasts for special occasions. Then one in-service day, Gail decided to hold a luncheon at her house and invite teachers. Very quickly others followed her lead and people began to host showers, birthday celebrations and holiday events (see Appendix B.1). A school's traditions can be an enriching and renewing aspect of school life (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Even relatively simple gatherings and events help to build bonds between people (see Appendix B.2). As teachers shared the experiences of their lives with each other, they created positive relationships (see Appendix B.3). Soon these personal relationships became professional relationships and made things easier when teachers had to negotiate the complex practices and procedures needed for school reform (Fullan, 1991; Hargreaves, 1989; Rosenholtz, 1989).

My final in-service day, I remember coming into the gym where staff was having a picnic lunch. Each grade level had contributed by being responsible for one part of the meal. People sat around sharing recipes and talking and laughing about their year and their vacation plans. What a far cry from the days when a live body couldn't be found

anywhere near the school or community during an in-service daybreak (see Appendix B.4).

A big change could also be seen in extra curricular activities. Initially, Jen and Mandy were the only two teachers who participated at the Student Council events (see Appendix B.5). But by my third year, we combined the two schools for dances and events and often had upwards of fifteen adults chaperoning with family members and spouses meeting afterwards for an evening out. During the fall of my third year, the school held an “October Fest” on a Saturday afternoon where sixteen teachers provided games, stories and snacks for the students.

My second year, we also began an after school tutoring program (see Appendix C.1). The program ran for an hour Monday through Thursday and re-taught and reinforced reading and math lessons for struggling students. I initially met with teachers to explain the program and to talk about its requirements. There is a growing body of evidence gathered since the “No Child Left Behind” law which indicates that after school programs are paying off particularly in communities with high poverty rates (<http://www.edgove/oubs/after-school/after-school>). Not only do small group sessions create an increase in interest and achievement for struggling students, the extra attention from a caring adult increases self-esteem and builds social skills which then transfer to the regular school day. I let teachers know that I was aware that many of them had other responsibilities after school. So, if they chose they could find a partner and split the days. There were twenty-two teachers who signed on for the after school programs.

My first year at Jefferson School teacher absenteeism was a looming problem. Teaching is an emotionally intense endeavor. When the workplace culture creates stress, anxiety and burnout, people begin to feel emotionally and physically unable to come to work (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Maslach & Leiter, 1997). When I arrived at Jefferson School, I had six fulltime substitutes who covered classes daily. Many times, those six people were still not sufficient to cover the large number of call-offs. I frequently needed to split up classes and assign students to the rooms of their peers. But by my third year, I had cut back to three subs and I had many days where these three teachers were used for meeting coverage or extra tutoring because no one would be out that day. Teachers frequently commented that their work was important now and they didn't want to miss. And as achievement rose, if teachers knew ahead of time that they were going to be absent, they often gave directions and materials to a colleague who would stop by to assist the sub and sometimes even take a challenging student for the day.

The number of teachers leaving the building for higher paying jobs in the suburbs also dropped. When I came to Jefferson School, fourteen teachers had resigned. At the end of my first year, only one teacher resigned and two left each following year. The staff was finally experiencing some consistency. Teacher turnover impacts a building culture in many ways (Ingersoll, 2001). A sense of community and cohesion between teachers, students and families is important for the success of schools. But, when there is a "revolving door" phenomenon, that cohesion becomes nearly impossible to achieve. In addition, teacher turnover frequently creates a situation where a classroom must be staffed with someone who hasn't been fully trained. Over the years,



enough gaps of this nature create gaps for students which becomes harder and harder to fill.

Problems with students rarely drive out teachers. Personal frustration and dissatisfaction with the situation is reported as the primary reason for people leaving the profession (Goodlad, 1984). Most teachers I met who had left Jefferson School said they didn't leave because of the children. They reported leaving because of the hostile environment among adults.

Two anonymous teacher surveys given out at the end of the year reflected the new sense of community. On a district wide survey statement # 33 read, "Teachers in my school are involved in decisions that matter." In 2000, six percent agreed. In 2005, that number grew to sixty percent. Statement #37 read, "My school has good administrative leadership" (see Appendix A.1). In 2000, forty percent agreed. In 2005, that number grew to eighty percent. On a building survey eighty four percent responded, "There was an improvement in Jefferson School." Handwritten comments revealed:

*"It was such a pleasure coming to work this year. You made it so easy for us. You listened and were open to any new ideas we had and wanted to try. You were always positive. I couldn't have asked for a better place to work."*

*"Everything improved this year especially the teacher morale, teacher-principal relationship. The general atmosphere was more relaxing and pressureless. Students were involved in more fun learning activities and I saw more parental involvement. For me it was a great school year."*

*"Establishing, developing staff morale. Beginnings of establishing a more kid centered school. Creating a happier workplace. Addressing not only short term behavioral and psychological issues and crisis but long term issues such as APS and counseling."*

*"Principal staff relations improved. I sincerely appreciated the support and acceptance."*

(see Appendix A.2).

## **Job Embedded Professional Development**

A major shift in the context occurred with a change in the professional development model that was used in the district and the building. Both the building and the district moved from a traditional speaker or workshop driven method of staff development to one that was embedded directly within the classrooms (DuFour & Eaker, 2005; Elmore, 2002; Senge et. al., 2000; Fullan, 1999; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Tyak & Cuban, 1995; Barth, 1990; Fullan, 1993). When this occurred many of the barriers to reform at Jefferson School were broken down and avenues to growth were opened. The new model of embedded staff development took on many forms.

One form was the deliberate and systematic review of data (see Appendix B.6). Teachers shared that they had previously been “data rich” and “information poor”. However, now through the work on “Data Days” with the PSDI team as well as during grade level meetings and “Learning Walks,” teachers began to look at both standardized and curriculum based student work for specific purposes (DuFour & Eaker, 2005; Elmore, 2002; Fullan, 2001; Sergiovanni, 1999; Schmoker, 1996; Goodlad, 1984). In conjunction with the Institute for Learning, staff also learned how to review authentic student work in teams to judge it for rigor and relevance and to share ideas for the teaching of the content. Teachers began to see data as not only a glimpse into a child’s progress but as a place to begin when making decisions regarding pedagogy (see Appendix B.7, B.8). Because they were feeling that the time they spent with data was valuable, teachers began to frequently come on their own free time or even after school to work on data teams. When I first came to Fairfield, principals were not a part of the staff development program. But over the years, as I asked to get

involved and join in, principals were given active roles and even asked to lead some of the groups. Eventually, the teachers began to see their principals as an instructional leader and an integral part of the decision-making team (Hallinger, 2000; Elmore, 2000; Barth, 1991; Duke, 1987).

A second form of staff development was in-class coaching. Our Literacy Coach, our Math Coach and our Behavior Specialist all pushed in and offered modeling and coaching of best practices (see Appendix C.1). Their work with the Institute for Learning, the Reading Achievement Center, the Math Science Partnership and varied mental health agencies could be directly shared with our teachers. Our coaches also became involved in trainings for team meetings and in-service days based on the work they were doing with teachers and students in class. During my third year at Jefferson School coaches and teachers began to use the 4Sight exams in reading and math (Success for All, 2000). Representing the tested eligible content from the PSSAs, students were assessed quarterly (see Appendix C.9). Utilizing staff development time to team with coaches, these assessments could be used for benchmarking information and to align curriculum and practice. It was during this team time with coaches that teachers began to recognize and bring forth their questions about topics such as flexible grouping options and differentiated instruction.

The third form of staff development was the frequent use of “Learning Walks”. This was a team visit during part or all of a designated class period to look at and learn more about a selected topic. Initially our walks were somewhat surface level but they evolved into very sophisticated learning experiences. Each grade was scheduled for a “Learning Walk” once a month.

During the post walk debriefing, teachers had a chance to give and receive feedback on their own instructional practices and the practices of their peers (see Appendix B.10, B.11). Many teachers told me that the post conference debriefing validated them as a teacher and provided a great opportunity for them to be reflective about their work. Teachers enjoyed the walks so much they frequently asked if they could also do informal visits which I tried to accommodate as much as was possible. A significant benefit of this practice was that during the designated period, everyone – district officials, building specialists, teachers and students – all focused on learning. Some areas we explored through the “Learning Walks” were phonemic awareness, comprehension strategies, flexible grouping, data driven decision-making and problem solving – all of which came from teacher input or feedback.

### **From a Scripted to a Balanced Literacy Program**

While there were many changes with respect to academics, a substantial shift in the context revolved around Jefferson School’s approach to literacy. When I first arrived in Fairfield, the district was using “Success for All” (Success for all Foundation) in grades Kindergarten through sixth for literacy. Designed specifically by Johns Hopkins to standardize reading instruction, “Success for All” was a scripted and structured program. Children were grouped by ability for instruction and could not move on to the next level until they passed the assessments at the current level.

While this structure was created by “Success for All” to prevent children from being moved ahead without skill mastery, in Fairfield this grouping practice had in reality created a large gap between proficient readers and weak readers that was very hard to

close over time. Often, struggling readers remained in a book or level for several years receiving repeated instruction rather than additional strategies geared to their learning profiles. Then, when children were asked to read grade level materials for standardized tests or state assessments, this was often practically impossible because they weren't used to doing so.

For the 2003-04 school year, a core reading team was formed with representatives from each grade and every elementary building. The team included administrators, reading specialists and special education teachers. Using the reference book *The Art of Teaching Reading* (Caulkins, 2001) and the report from the National Reading Panel (2000), the staff began to frame some "look-fors" that would need to be addressed with the new adoption. Specifically, the following list was compiled:

- A program that was research-based and addressed the five components of reading – phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency
- A program that addressed readers of all levels and provided many grouping opportunities to meet individual student needs
- A program that had an abundance of decodable text and leveled readers to provide daily oral reading opportunities for children
- A program that embedded literature and was culturally diverse and would engage children from many backgrounds and experiences
- A program that had materials for intervention groups that linked with the daily instruction

Moving to a more balanced approach to literacy may have been particularly beneficial to our Jefferson population. Sadly, children of poverty come to school less positioned for success in identifying and manipulating the sounds of our language- a critical early literacy skill. Typically children from poverty hear an average of 125 words per hour compared to 616 from middle class homes and 2153 from professional families. In many cases this gap has been able to be closed but only with consistent and repeated instruction in the five main components of a balanced literacy program (Snow et. al., 1991).

Harcourt Trophies came out as the top choice for a literacy program. Because of their involvement and consensus with the program, teachers began the following school year energized and excited to begin teaching reading. Administratively, before the adoption was implemented, a difficult staffing decision had to be made with regards to the staffing. "Success for All" had used the Title I reading teachers in two roles. One was as a "Reading Facilitator" and the other as a "Reading Tutor". Over the years, the "Facilitator" role had become largely relegated to paperwork and occasional assessment. The tutoring role had become a place to hold staff that was displaced or ineffective in other roles. Both positions were minimally involved in direct reading instruction but were held by senior staff, and in several cases, bargaining unit officers.

Thinking about how to best impact instruction and achievement, the administrative team decided to completely redo the roles. Each elementary building would have two literacy positions. The first would be a "Literacy Coach" that would primarily work with teachers in developing best practice. The other would be a "Reading Interventionist" who would work with teachers and small groups of students to

provide individual or small group instruction. All positions would be posted and advertised through the bargaining unit. Deciding to fill these positions with the “best and the brightest” from within the staff, the administrative team hoped to give children who were struggling access to the best teachers.

Then during the summer of 2003, another avenue opened that served to further impact literacy achievement in the building. A building team was accepted to the Pennsylvania Governor’s Academy on Urban Learning. Consisting of the principal, guidance counselor, one special education teacher and three certified classroom teachers, the team traveled to Muhlenberg State College for the week of June 20-June 25. The keynote speaker for the conference was Robert Cooter, Jr. of the University of Memphis, formerly of the Dallas Independent School District who addressed the group and then headed up breakout sessions during the week on urban literacy.

Particularly, Cooter referenced his work within the Dallas School System on reading program reform. He noted that several school-wide practices contribute to effective literacy gains:

- ***Access to print:*** print rich classrooms with at least 300 grade level titles for students
- ***Access to leadership:*** a building principal committed to literacy with a strong knowledge base in knowing how to support literacy
- ***Access to expertise:*** giving the most needy readers the benefit of the most trained reading specialists
- ***Access to planning time:*** opportunities for literacy teachers to meet and coordinate services to children

- ***Access to professional development:*** continuous and coherent work towards developing and honing the understandings, insights and skills necessary to teach reading (Cooter & Reutzel, 1999).

Thinking about Cooter's ideas, each team was asked to do a needs assessment of their building's literacy program and devise and submit an action plan which addressed a specific need within their building. Looking at the previous year's literacy data and brainstorming how the information Cooter presented could fit in with the impending adoption, the group determined that Jefferson School was moving ahead in most areas except the latter. In deciding about how to best begin the staff development needed for the new series, an action plan that supported literacy in the following was devised.

First, the team would present for staff a workshop at the start of the year that would address and review the five key components of reading as identified by the National Reading Panel (2000). Specifically, those components were phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency. Each team member would select one area and work with the coach, myself and other district experts to identify best practice and ways to organize for instruction around those areas.

Every classroom and learning support teacher at Jefferson School would receive a poster designed by the Jefferson Governor's Team entitled "What a Balanced Literacy Program Looks Like" (see Appendix B.12). The class sized graphic organizer would depict explicit strategies and best practice that can be observed during the instruction of reading within each critical area. Each poster would be displayed in the classroom to be used as a reference for literacy planning.



A note taking form was devised which listed the five key areas of reading. The form also had a section designated for documenting the “Principles of Learning” (Resnick, 1999) that were evidenced – an ongoing district focus for instruction (see Appendix B.13). A decision was made to try and hold on to some of the work that was done in this area the previous year, particularly in the area of “Accountable Talk” a skill that would no doubt impact literacy instruction. Part of the grant money from the Governor’s Academy would be used to provide substitutes so staff could observe their grade level peers during reading instruction and then debrief about the strategies they viewed and the impact of these strategies on reading proficiency. These visits would occur minimally once a semester and the principal, literacy coach and interventionist would be part of the visit and debriefing. In addition, all formal observations of teachers for the year would occur in the literacy block so collaboration on the reading implementation process could be facilitated.

Throughout the 2004-05, teachers began to work their way through the program. As the elements of the balanced literacy program were implemented, steady gains in student achievement were noted on measures such as the DIBELS (Dynamic Indicator of Basic Literacy Skills), 4Sight (Success for All) and the PSSA (Pennsylvania State System of Assessment). As with anything new, the adoption process had its share of peaks and valleys. Visiting and meeting was a great way to share ideas but sometimes teachers most needed to be insulated from outside pressures and have the freedom to close their doors and work through the program and learn from their own successes and failures.

Early on, teachers felt it was important to involve parents in the new reading program. Using School Improvement Funds, we decided to have each grade host a “Parent Literacy Night.” Parents could come to school for a light supper and preview materials and learn more about ways to support literacy at home. The meetings were well attended with topics like “Sensational Sight Words” in first grade and “Computer Literacy” in sixth grade (see Appendix B.14).

As children arrive within the classroom on various points on the learning curve, so do adults. Jefferson teachers had been socialized for years to meet their own adult needs. Moving to student centered practices like homogeneous grouping meant spending time an abundance of time discussing what that means for teachers and what the benefits of this new structure would be for their students. Some teachers welcomed the changes and embraced the new materials and structures easily. Others were more set in their ways and exhibited slow and labored progress.

For primary teachers, the new program was not as drastic a change because much of the instruction was in phonemic awareness and phonics, which they were already used to. But for the intermediate teachers, where students came to them, in many cases, well below grade level, the challenges were great and staff had to work hard to provide grouping options, extra tutoring and adaptations and modifications to move forward. Astonishingly, gains could be seen the following fall when for the first time in the history of the school, Jefferson School made its AYP target in reading.

## **Child-centered Decision-making and Approaches to Learning**

At our initial faculty meeting in 2003, I talked to staff about a child-centered school. Within this model, the guiding question, “What is best for the child?” lies behind every action. All tasks from ordering supplies to crafting schedules ultimately looks at how each decision affects students and their learning. Change, at many levels, began to occur as this question kept being raised.

One of our first tasks was to organize the day at Jefferson School to maximize student learning. Seeing that our youngest learners tired in the afternoon, primary teachers worked with me to schedule their special area classes like art, music and physical education then. Lunchtime was scheduled a little past the center of the day to allow class periods of forty-five minutes in length and to create a longer morning so periods could be combined to create larger blocks for reading and math. A five minute time was placed between periods for transitions so students, particularly Learning Support and Emotional Support students, would have time to get where they needed to be without missing valuable instructional minutes. The placement of reading and math was rotated so the specialists could push in or pull out for student support within various grades. Time was blocked out of the schedules to allow for common planning times within grades so teachers could allocate part of the time for collaborating and sharing.

After my initial year, the placement of students became very deliberate. The grade level teachers, counselor, Child Study Team, coaches and Special Education teachers were asked give input regarding student strengths and needs. Using this information, teams assigned students to classes balancing groups and matching student needs and teacher styles. Every effort was made to create classroom learning

communities rather than simply randomly placing students in first-come/first-served fashion, as in the past.

At the end of my second year, I also reconfigured the building. In the past, teachers had been assigned a classroom at the start of the year and that's where they remained for the remainder of their career. This practice worked well for adults but for students it meant that grade level classrooms could be anywhere. Special education students and/or students being tutored were moved all over the building. In my plan, I started with the youngest students and assigned them the rooms closest to the offices and then grouped all the kindergartens, first grades, second grades, continuing in this fashion. Teachers were next to each other to collaborate and more importantly, students were together for grouping options. The Learning Support rooms were located in with the grade levels they were working with. Although initially, I received a lot of resistance from the teachers who held a room for eleven or twelve years, eventually most teachers readily adapted to the change.

When the building was reconfigured, I also made a deliberate change to the office. The guidance office was moved out of the front office area so students who came for a "cool-down" or a "time-out" could do so without being in front of the public eye. The nurse's office and the In School Suspension Room were also relocated to that area so those staff members could support each other. The coaches' suite was situated in the front office area so teachers would have access to them for questions throughout the day and so that our building staff could see the importance placed on instruction.

Over the three-year period, the facility also took on a new look. The signs that read "NO Dogs," "NO Trespassing," "NO Bikes," "NO Parking" were taken down. A

partnership was formed with Deloitte-Touche (see Appendix B.15, B.16, B.17). Each year, they brought a busload of employees and worked with students and teachers to pull weeds, plant shrubs and flowers, and apply a fresh coat of paint to the benches, planters and doors. We also worked with the Western Pennsylvania Conservatory through the Clayton-Frick house and they donated a perennial garden between the school and the trailers. I also asked the maintenance department to cut back the shrubs covering my office window. They told me that the last principal wanted them grown tall so people couldn't tell if she was in the office. I told them I wanted people to see me and I wanted to see them. I asked them to keep the bushes low and routinely wash the windows.

A solar system and a map of the United States were painted on the playground. Each fall, the Student Council had a fall clean-up day and applied fresh mulch and raked the leaves. The inside walls were painted white and a fresh ceiling and new lights were installed in the office area. At the bottom of the ramp, a line of dusty and rusted cabinets were removed and a meeting area and a teacher resource center was established with bright tables and chairs, a laminator, ELLIS machine and teacher resource books.

Pictures of tigers ready to pounce were taken down from the hallways, cafeterias and gym and bright banners that showed multicultural students and gave inspirational messages like "In Our School No Child Gets Left Behind" were hung instead. Tacking strips were hung outside classrooms for displaying student work and teachers were asked to showcase samples of their best work. The insides of classrooms also began to change. Teachers brought colorful curtains, beanbag chairs, rocking chairs and other

colorful accessories to engage and motivate students. From all the coaching and the staff development, teachers began to use new pedagogical practices with students such as cooperative groups, hands-on activities, and problem based learning activities (Senge et. al., 2000; Thomlinson, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Danielson, 1996). As this occurred, the rows within the classrooms faded and desks were pulled together into pairs or groups reflecting the need to have students come together.

From the new focus on students, programs and services began to align. Special education and regular education teachers regularly collaborated and then tried team teaching and partnering. The after school and summer school programs were redone to support the work done during the school day. Teachers working in those programs were given training on strategies such as “Word Building” or “Everyday Math” games from the coaches. They were also required to do pre/post testing and keep a binder of their plans and assessments. I visited the after school and summer school classes daily so teachers could see that I valued the work they were doing and also to be sure that the programs were being implemented as outlined.

The move to a child-centered environment was able to get a large boost when I had the opportunity to realign the support staff in the building. The Child Study Coordinator left Jefferson School for a Central Office position and the new reading program afforded us the opportunity to redefine the literacy support roles. Each of these positions was able to be filled with a staff member who had already exhibited the ability to form strong relationships with students and be a leader among their peers. In particular, the Child Study Coordinator was filled by a veteran Special Education teacher. Early on, she exhibited some negativity and cynicism herself. However, as we

worked together and she embraced the challenges of her new role, she simply blossomed. She not only serviced many struggling students, she facilitated numerous meetings with teachers, parents and agencies to help meet student needs. Her work made a big difference for students and teachers at Jefferson School (see Appendix B.18, B.19).

My second year at Jefferson School, we began to hold regular meetings with the support staff. Using the coaches, counselor, Child Study coordinator, In School Suspension teacher and the behavioral specialist as a “team of experts” we frequently talked through the cases of struggling children and brainstormed ways to catch them before they fell. Some of our children had very difficult lives and it really did take support from a variety of levels to keep them classroom ready (see appendix).

Over the three year period, a steady shift from adult-centered to child-centered decision making occurred at Jefferson School. As teachers’ mindsets changed, the level of student achievement and engagement also rose. In 2004, the district was removed from the state Empowerment list with the achievement at Jefferson School being a significant contributing factor.

### **Buildingwide Positive Behavior Support Plan**

A major component of a child-centered school is a positive approach towards behavior. Although many staff members easily agreed to try more positive approaches to teaching, most still preferred traditional punitive approaches to discipline. The problem with that approach was that since behavior remained uncorrected, repeat offenses occurred. Students were missing valuable instructional time serving strings of

detentions and suspensions. In follow-up lessons they wouldn't understand things and they'd become angry. Students would then get sent out for inappropriate behavior and the cycle would continue.

Working with a behavioral specialist, a Core team was formed to look at student behavior. Teachers representing all grade levels and special areas were on the team. After several team members attended the Governor's Academy for Urban Education, a choice was made to use the Pennsylvania Department of Education's plan for Effective Behavior Support (see appendix B.20). Unlike traditional behavioral management, which views the individual as the problem and seeks to "fix" him or her by quickly eliminating the challenging behavior, positive behavioral support views systems, settings and lack of skill as parts of the problem. Appropriate behavior is directly taught and contextual supports are provided to help all children eventually adopt desired behaviors.

The behavioral specialist formally presented to the Core team and then to the staff at large a model of behavioral support that was aligned to the behavioral framework presented at the Governor's School (Sugai & Horner, 2002, see appendix). Using a pyramid configuration, the base level of this program outlines whole group universal supports which usually prove to be effective for 80% of the students. These consist of clearly defined, positively stated rules that apply to all students, all staff, and all settings. Along with the rules come exemplars of the rules. The rules and behaviors are taught to students and students are acknowledged for mastery of the skills. Previously, school rules were written and enforced as "don'ts" and there were only



consequences for breaking rules and no acknowledgement of keeping rules so this was a new way of thinking for staff and students (see Appendix B.21).

The process of building a plan specifically for Jefferson School began by collecting data on behavior. Student names and infractions were entered into a data file. The In-school Suspension teacher and counselor began to keep a daily log of students sent to the office. After examining the behaviors, as suspected, many negative behaviors were occurring in the common areas such as the gym, cafeteria, halls and restroom.

As a team, we wrote up student expectations for each area and presented those to students in grade level assemblies. We asked teachers to take a little time each day to coach and review the rules. The expectations were also sent home to parents in a newsletter (see Appendix B.22). Students who met the behavioral expectations were named to the “Jefferson Stars” and were given a reward at the end of each nine-week period (see Appendix B. 23). The older students were treated to things like the movies, bowling, and a Pirate game. The younger students earned a pajama party, a magic show and a puppet show. Students who didn’t meet the expectations were given “decision points” and were coached into making better decisions (see Appendix B.24). We also began a lunch detention program that dealt specifically with lunchtime behaviors so that students wouldn’t need to be removed from class because of lunch hour behaviors.

The Core team then looked at all students who didn’t make the rewards. The second level in the pyramid focuses on 10-15% of the student population who are not successful with the supports alone. These students require extra behavioral coaching

so they were assigned to the Child Study Coordinator or the counselor for small group work and occasionally individual sessions in social skills, self-management strategies and mentoring. We also began to use a technique recommended at the Governor's School called "restorative practice" with these students (see Appendix B.25). Restorative practice 'confronts and disapproves of wrongdoing while supporting and valuing the intrinsic worth of the student who committed the wrong (Wachtel, 1993). It seeks to be both supportive and limit setting using student centered statements and questions that center on making good choices or decisions (see Appendix B.26). We also kept referral data by teacher and then assigned the behavioral specialist to the classrooms with teachers who seemed to have the most referrals (see Appendix B.27).

Finally, we looked at the 5% of students we had who needed intensive intervention (see Appendix B.28). The behavioral specialist met with teachers and parents to write up individual plans for these children which addressed their particular needs. He then pushed into classes to coach teachers in the effective strategies for these students and to monitor the plans (see Appendix B.30). He also met regularly with each student's family so that parents could follow-up with the plans at home. Frequently these students were also referred to Mental Health or for a Multi Disciplinary Evaluation for special services (see Appendix B.31).

The restructuring of the Special Education program to allow for an Emotional Support classroom also had a major impact on the building behavior. Opening a small class that could be primarily used for students with severe emotional disorders gave these students a structured and nurturing environment to learn and practice appropriate behavior and social skills. As they made gains, the teacher would slowly coach

students into the mainstream with goals and charts and support for the homeroom teacher.

As a Core Behavior Team, we also used the discipline data to identify our most frequent student infractions. We compiled and presented a handbook for teachers on ways to effectively manage those behaviors in the classroom so that valuable instruction would not be interrupted. We also presented some of the resources we obtained at the Governor's School, particularly from "The Responsive Classroom" (Charney et. al., 1996) and "The Morning Meeting" (Kriete, 1999).

The Core Team redid our referral form and met with teachers to redefine behaviors that should have in-class consequences and behaviors that should have office consequences (see Appendix B.32). Over the three-year period, student behavior at Jefferson School changed significantly. In September of 2003, thirty-nine out of school suspensions were served and fifty-two in-school suspensions were served (see Appendix B.33). In September of 2004, thirteen out of school suspensions and twenty-four in school suspensions were served (see Appendix B.34). This marked a 20% increase of students remaining in class for their lessons. In October 2003, when the "Jefferson Stars" program started, 32.3% of the building students were recommended by their teachers for the reward program for following the building rules. In September of 2004, 86.3% attended (see Appendix B.35).

Even with gains such as these, the change to a positive behavior model was the most difficult initiative for teachers in the switch to a child-centered school. There was still a lingering longing for the days when the tapping of a pencil could get a child sent to in-school detention just to make life easier for the adult. The district survey reflects this

attitude. 35% of the teachers at Jefferson School chose “a great deal” to “To what extent do discipline problems disrupt instruction in your classroom?” (see Appendix A.1). Discipline continued to be an administrative challenge.

### **Removal from the Empowerment List**

Over the three year period at Jefferson Elementary slow steady academic gains could begin to be seen. Within the district, assessments portrayed a picture of slow steady growth. The 4-Sight (Success for All) benchmarks revealed that both individual children and classroom sections were progressing from the initial baseline tests (see Appendix B.9). For grades K-2, the students were screened with the DIBELS (Dynamic Indicator of Basic Literacy Skills), as part of the Reading Apprenticeship. After intervention, students showed steady growth in phonemic awareness, word recognition and fluency. Through the Data Days (see Appendix B.6) and grade level planning meetings (see Appendix B.7), teachers collaborated to agree on common assessments at each grade level. They then brought the scores and samples of student work to the meetings to monitor progress. Curriculum-based assessments such as authentic problem solving tasks and unit tests also showed steady growth.

Under NCLB, the district participated in the statewide PSSA (Pennsylvania State System of Assessment) assessments. Initially, only the fifth grade was tested in the elementary thereby providing only one grade with a growth index. In Reading the number of proficient or advanced students rose from 41.6% in 2003, to 42.8% in 2004 and 50% in 2005. In math the number of proficient or advanced rose from 44.4% to 51.2% to 56.3% ([www.pde.state.pa.us](http://www.pde.state.pa.us)) . Placed on the state Empowerment list in

2000, the district was removed from the list in 2005 (Frazier, 2005). The scores from Jefferson Elementary significantly contributed to the growth indicators.

### **Stakeholders Engaged**

At the end of the three-year period, there were three groups of stakeholders who increased their participation at or with Jefferson School – students, parents and the community. Many new programs and activities were initiated to engage the students. First, a strong Student Council was established (see Appendix B.36). The children elected two students from each intermediate homeroom that worked with Jen and me to plan and host various student-generated and run activities. Events like monthly dances, a Teacher Appreciation breakfast, and a spring carnival were held (see Appendix B.37). As the school moved to a child centered model, students became ready to take on additional responsibility. During the third year the older students started partnering with the youngest students being “reading and writing buddies” and hosting holiday celebrations. Being in the Student council was seen as a position of leadership and privilege and students worked hard to earn and keep their spots.

A basketball team, cheerleaders, and a travel basketball team were formed (see Appendix B.38). Tickets were obtained to events like concerts, circuses and sporting events and staff and students attended on the weekends and evenings. Jefferson School began to participate in In-School Scouting and forty children went to the Laurel Highlands for a scouting overnight. Each grade was allocated budget money to take a field trip during the school day that would be aligned to the curriculum. At first teachers were reluctant to agree to go saying that the children wouldn't behave, but they

eventually were able to be talked into going and chose excellent venues such as the Pittsburgh Playhouse, The Carnegie Science Center and the Bedford Village for their students to visit.

As the children began to develop relationships with their teachers during these extra activities, they began to cooperate and work with them in the classrooms. Many of our children were so poor they had never left the community until the school provided the opportunity. For me, coming from schools where students are showered with so much, I marveled at how grateful children could be after a short car ride to Oakland. A student survey was given to sixth graders at the close of the first school year. 77% of the students responded that they had more activities that they could participate in during the school year. 57.6% felt they were more of a part of the school this year. On the write in section of the survey the list of what they liked was long "...roller skating, field trips, dances, cheerleading, camping, student council, movie nights, fun fair, cookout, cleanup days" and reflected even the simplest of activities (see Appendix A.3).

Recognizing that parents are a child's first teacher and that successful schools partner with parents, The Jefferson School parents were welcomed to Jefferson School within the new child-centered model (Fullan, 2001, 1993; Senge et. al., 2000, 1999; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Barth, 1990,). For parents, many times visits to the school had been negative in the past, so an effort had to be made to be welcoming and positive so they would want to return (see Appendix B.39). Performances were a great way to get parents to school and once they were there, we could talk to them about supporting us, regular attendance and academic programs (see Appendix B.40, 41).

Because the neighborhood was so poor, food was also a draw. We tried to let parents know we'd have refreshments. We had "Muffins for Mom" and "Donuts for Dad" and PSSA family dinners. Monthly PTA meetings were held and we used our Parent Coordinator to call parents on the day before meetings or special events just to say we were hoping to see them there (see appendix). I made a point to stop and talk to parents especially at dismissal to give positive reports and encouraged teachers to do so, as well (see Appendix B.44, B.45). Slowly parents began to trickle back to school. Results of a parent survey given out at the end of the 2003 school year to sixth grade parents show that 70% of the parents surveyed said they felt more comfortable visiting the school. 41% said they felt more comfortable calling the principal's office. 76% said they saw an improvement in the way issues were handled. 58% said there was an improvement in the activities for children and 70% said they saw an improvement in the focus on education.

Handwritten comments revealed:

*"The principal was one-on-one, hands-on, inside and out with student and parent concerns"*

*"In the beginning of the school year there were many changes, new teachers and a new principal. I did not think things would turn out as well as they did. The principal participated in many activities outside of school, during evenings and on weekends. The teachers and staff really had an impact on my daughter's last year at Jefferson Elementary."*  
(see appendix A.4)

Because Fairfield was an urban area, an abundance of resources were close by and interested in partnering with our school. Partnerships were formed with groups like Project STAR, Lights on After School, the Girl/Boy Scouts and Big Brothers/Big Sisters. Numerous churches took students in after school programs (see Appendix B.46). Other churches gave students coats, bookbags and school supplies (see Appendix B.47). The Kiwanis and Lion's Club also hosted events and celebrations for students (see

Appendix B.48). My second year at Jefferson School, a suburban businessman approached me about sponsoring a family for Christmas because he had a very lucrative year in business. I easily found a family who was thrilled with the help. His story inspired others and my third Christmas; twelve families were sponsored complete with gifts, food and decorations.

We also had many educational partnerships. The Pittsburgh Symphony sent an ensemble once a month and played for kids and taught them basic music skills (see Appendix B.49, B.50). We also sent a group each week to the Clayton-Frick House to learn about Pittsburgh history and sent another group to a community center for robotics and swimming (see Appendix B.51). Another partnership was formed with Gateway to the Arts to give our students a chance to observe live theatre (see Appendix B.52). A partnership was also formed with the University of Pittsburgh. Students had practicums and internships at Jefferson School (see Appendix B.52).

Students, parent and community groups offered Jefferson School the chance to utilize a rich array of talents and personalities (see Appendix B.53). Each provided the building with unique activities, experiences and supports to the learning environment. The door to Jefferson School, once surrounded by overt negative notices and covert subliminal banners was now open to all who wanted to get to know the captivating and engaging children within.



## **CHAPTER 6: CHALLENGES OF CHANGE REVISITED**

### **Change at Jefferson School**

Many factors contribute to change within school organizations. Within recent years, change has been initiated by federal legislation, national initiatives such as Title I and Reading First and statewide systems of standards and assessments. At the local level change has occurred when new officials were elected, new programs were introduced to districts and school staff was changed (Elmore, 2002, 2000; Senge et. al., 1999; Fullan, 1999, 1993; Goodlad, 1984; Lortie, 1975).

In 2003, Jefferson School experienced many of these changes. Legislation had mandated school improvement, fourteen new teachers were hired for the building and a partnership was formed with the district and the University of Pittsburgh. Among all these changes, another change occurred – the coming of a new principal.

The purpose of this study has been to document and analyze the challenges of change as seen from the lens of the building principal. In Chapter 1, this study opened by discussing several dichotomies and paradoxes of change as found in the literature on leading during a period of change. Posed in question format, each was labeled as a “Challenge of Change.” After collecting, presenting and interpreting various narrative accounts of change that occurred in one urban elementary school over a three-year period, I will now revisit the questions from Chapter 1. Referencing examples within the narratives combined with their corresponding interpretations, I will summarize what this

instance of school reform reveals about leading during change and its implications for leadership.

I hope the Jefferson School story will contribute to a wider body of knowledge amassed around the topic of school reform. As other school leaders, researchers and reformers read and react to this one description and interpretation of leadership, I hope to connect to the larger discourse community that holds accounts of many instances of educational reform. It is with the sharing of common experience that we can all learn together.

***CHALLENGE 1: If leaders cannot get people to change simply by telling them what to do, what moves people to change?***

The narratives from Jefferson School support the notion that change is a process and not an event (Fullan, 1999, 1993; Stacey, 1992; Pascale, 1990; Marris, 1975). Like other forms of authentic learning, change occurs most readily in a climate of inquiry (Fullan, 1999, 1993; Senge et. al., 1999; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Stacey, 1996). Similar to a master teacher, a leader's task when introducing new ideas is to create opportunities where teachers can work together and uncover through discussion and experience the best course of action for them within their classrooms and building.

Collaboration is a powerful tool within the change process (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Elmore, 2000; Spillane, 1999; Senge et. al., 1999; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Sykes, 1996). The stories of the office team (p. 69-76) illustrate how working in concert with others was a way of developing common beliefs and practices leading to new ideas and additional study. Even when personalities were very different and people had competing interests, working together and focusing on common goals brought people to

consensus. The stories of Josephine, Mike and Gail (p. 71-76) revealed how very unique individuals could blend their talents and strengths to support an entire building.

Even in a strong positive climate, change creates some degree of anxiety (Fullan 1999, 1993; Stacey, 1992; Marris, 1975). In negative environments, the challenge becomes even more difficult because of the fragile and sometimes fragmented emotions of people (Baker & Greenberg, 2006; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Farber, 1991). The stories (p. 69-76) illustrated that in this case, until the overarching needs of adults were met, adults could not really begin to think about meeting the needs of students.

LaKeisha's story (p. 69-71) noted how talking through change, developing core values and building personal relationships could all contribute to one's acceptance of change. Losing past practice, regardless of how negative, is a loss of the known and familiar (Kearney & Hyde, 2003; Fullan, 1999, 1993; Barger & Kirby, 1997; Kubler-Ross, 1969; Marris, 1975). People needed to see that their leader, particularly their new one, recognized that workers were people first and acknowledged that individual struggles were a natural part of change.

People's perceptions are critical in a social environment. The stories we tell about ourselves shape our culture (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; James, 1996; Sarason, 1990). A large part of the process is developing relationships first so a culture of working together and solving problems is established (Senge et. al., 2000, 1999; Fullan, 1999, 1993; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Barth, 1990). The stories of Jen, Mandy and Carol (p. 89-93) described how a building principal could bring both positive and not so positive moments to a teacher's attention and have them make a difference in a climate of trust.

Although leadership cannot dictate change, leadership certainly has a direct role in its implementation (Senge et. al., 2000, 1999; Fullan, 1999, 1993; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Barth, 1990). People need feedback as they do their jobs and a principal who is in the classrooms is able to understand his/her staff's strengths and can contribute to solutions. The teacher narratives revealed that adults (p. 89-95) frequently needed encouraged to try new things and to be insulated from criticism until they were given a chance to practice new strategies and learn from their mistakes. And as the key moments with Paulette and Ted noted (p. 93-95), some teachers needed additional coaching or an intervention such as spending time in a peer's classroom to see what strong pedagogy looked like. Leadership was needed, in these cases to see that ideas were implemented and to ensure that collegiality and professionalism were all a part of the learning process.

As the narratives also brought forth (p. 69-76, p. 89-95), a principal could be as challenged by change as their staff because they, too, are human with their own emotions. The change process takes many loops and turns and can evoke a leader's own emotions at times. At Jefferson School, I was often challenged by the competing need to leave time for staff to accept and work through change and the urgency of meeting student needs – a frequent dilemma.

Within the building, the principal must devise a way to communicate regularly and tell the stories of success over and over (Barth, 2003; Senge et. al., 2000, 1999; Deal & Peterson, 1999; DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Teachers are motivated by what they see as good work. Holding meetings to share, sending notes, praising within classrooms – all those activities generated and maintained a climate of enthusiasm

which was beneficial during a time of change (p. 69-76, p. 89-95). However, the stories celebrated needed to be authentic and credible (Deal & Peterson, 1999; DuFour & Eaker, 1998). If the messenger couldn't be believed, the stories would be lost in the delivery.

Because leading during change is not simply mandating actions, many leadership styles are needed throughout the change process (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Sergiovanni, 1992; Senge et. al., 2000, 1999; Fullan, 1999, 1993). Sometimes, a leader was needed to provide support. Other times a leader was needed to apply pressure. Sometimes empowering others was important. Other times taking the initiative and beginning a reform measure was useful. Like change itself, moving in and out of leadership styles was frequently messy and complicated. It was easy to question and second-guess decisions.

Communication creates understanding for all – even for leaders. Talking things over with others like Gail or Ana (p. 74-76, p. 114-116) was a way to reflect on my leadership and weigh out decisions. Bringing clarity to practices creates predictability. From there, predictability, in turn creates trust. And in a climate of trust, people were free to take risks as learners thereby giving change a chance.

***CHALLENGE 2: If leadership cannot predetermine the path of change, how can people be prepared for the journey?***

Because change is not predictable, a leader can never totally prepare for a change that may be coming (Fullan, 1999, 1993; Stacey, 1992; Marris, 1975). However, a leader who does nothing at all risks the chance of having followers too

immobilized to entertain even a small degree of change. Finding a way to bring structure to a messy process is certainly a daunting issue.

As the narratives illustrated, one way to have people cope with change was to communicate frequently about changes that were occurring. Attending planning meetings, hosting celebrations and visiting classroom lessons were places to interact with teachers (p. 89-95). Doing that accomplished several functions. First, the leader was out there on the path of uncertainty with staff. Perspectives could be heard and entertained as changes occurred. The opportunity to change simple things early on before new ideas become routine was available.

As the stories of Carol, Mandy and Jen related (p. 89-95), some time devoted before and after school hours to talk to teachers about change was helpful. Often without the children there, the focus could be on validating successes and minimizing setbacks so that people felt encouraged about their attempts at change. Talking through personal struggles with change was also helpful. Verbalizing how change was unpredictable for me (p.89-95) seemed to help staff accept the process more readily.

Along with communicating frequently, another procedure to facilitate change at Jefferson School was keeping a routine for as much as possible, knowing that some of the new initiatives would spiral and could not be controlled. Meeting days, grade level times or the schedules for Learning Walks were rarely changed. Because so much was changing regarding pedagogy and instruction, people could be easily sidetracked with schedule changes and other minor changes.

Looking to people's strengths, the stories of the coaches and the Child Study Coordinator (p. 93-95) point out how teacher leaders can step up and do great things for

kids with just a small amount of guidance and support from the principal. The story of Jen (p. 89-91) and her work with the Emotional Support Room conveys how even the work of one powerful teacher can impact many classes within a building. All of those people doing their jobs so well, motivated me, in turn to be a better leader. Yet, the stories also illustrated how there were times at Jefferson School where growth was stymied and no movement occurred (p. 69-76). While young people sponged up new ways of thinking, people like Mike and Josephine put up shield after shield of excuses and blame. Time was needed to slowly chip away at their negative ways of thinking to move forward.

As the narratives also bring forth (p. 71-76, 93-95), the task of getting the right people in the right positions was extremely complex. As a principal, one rarely gets to choose more than a handful of staff members at any given time, and certainly in a district like Fairfield, the forces of the teachers' union and past politics work on teachers. Building leaders must be willing to advocate for their buildings at the classroom level and within the district and community (Barth, 2003; Fullan, 1999, 1993). All levels of support are important so critical decisions made will support the culture of the building.

Sometimes, particularly within this setting, the simple recognition that I had been a leader before and felt comfortable leading teachers was a comfort to staff. When we visited my former school and observed classes with special needs students and talked to teachers there, it gave teachers at Jefferson the confidence to attempt change. Bringing together ideas is a role that leadership can assume. Because of the isolation of teachers and the way our public schools are structured, principals and other administrators might have more of a bird's eye view than teachers. With information

that is available to them, administrators can create avenues for teachers to learn and visit models of teaching and instruction besides their own and learn techniques and strategies that would benefit them (Elmore, 2000; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Senge et. al., 2000; Goodlad, 1984).

A climate of inquiry doesn't mean that everything out there is given equal consideration. Frequently the best preparation for change is research into appropriate solutions (Elmore, 2000; Senge et. al., 2000; Fullan, 1999, 1993; Dufour & Eaker, 1998). Teams of teachers, administrators and experts need to study problems and avoid solutions that would not work within their environment. The more a problem is researched, the more likely it is that the best solutions will emerge. Working with experts like the behavioral specialist, the Governor's Academy presenters and the Pitt team gave us access to much expertise (p. 89-95). The more questions were raised, the more choices emerged that would meet student needs.

Supporting people who have the courage to try new approaches is really important for a leader (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Danielson, 1996). The story of Mandy (p. 89-91) illustrates how quickly a teacher could be discouraged by negative peers. Intervention is frequently needed from the building administrator to encourage and motivate those who work to meet student needs.

Clearly, a leader's own ability to deal with the emotion of change in the workplace sets a model for those posed for change. A leader who sees change as exciting and as an opportunity for growth brings a much different perspective to staff than one who sees change as systems interference. For me, sometimes the best thing I could do to help others prepare for change was to embrace the excitement and uncertainty that came



from being on a new journey myself, and then share those emotions with those who were traveling with me.

***CHALLENGE 3: Since productive educational reform usually falls somewhere between control and chaos, how does a leader negotiate that balance?***

The urge to control is very strong for leaders because then things are done in a way that best suits a leader's styles and preferences (Fullan, 1993, 1999; Stacey, 1992; Barth, 1991). However, that might mean that the way things are being done doesn't necessarily meet the needs of staff or students. On the other hand, not having any control means that people do whatever they wish but with no real purpose (Fullan, 2001; Elmore, 2000; Sarason, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1989). Buildings in many ways, are similar to classrooms. Classrooms with controlled chaos like Mandy's (p. 89-91) are those which house strong climates for learning (Senge et. al., 2000; Thomlinson, 1999; Resnick, 1999; Wiggins & McTigue, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 1994). Similarly, buildings with controlled chaos can be ideal containers for learning communities. Too much reform causes a systems overload where nothing gets accomplished. But too little reform means a system stagnates and stands still (Fullan, 2001; Elmore, 2000; Stacey, 1996; Sarason, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1989). A balance is needed which allows growth through established limits.

At Jefferson School, one way I was able to negotiate through change was to team with others as reform was initiated. Using the office team, a pilot group of teachers and content specialists, I seldom worked alone (p. 69-76, p. 89-95). Not only

does work become shared, but decisions can be tried out on a small group first, not needing to impact everyone until solutions are found to be acceptable.

Within the group, sometimes it was my role to not let a dominant way of thinking control practices that wouldn't benefit the organization. For example, the exclusion of children for long disciplinary sanctions was working against the goals of the organization. Other systems of behavior support were important to consider (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Yet without leadership pushing to work with experts such as the behavioral specialist, teachers, as a group, were supporting punitive rather than restorative practices.

The portrayals (p.89-95) illustrated how teachers could slowly learn new patterns of practice. Then children who were given parameters for their behavior and who were coached and monitored into appropriate behaviors could take on responsibility and exhibit very different behaviors. The stories also showed that the shift wasn't linear (p. 69-76, p. 89-95). Some children mastered the skills very quickly but others needed more support. Teachers would become frustrated and say that the system wasn't working before it was given a chance. It took time to coach and work with both sides – shifting between chaos and control.

Again, one of the best ways to manage change was with frequent communication. Getting questions answered and explanations presented diverted what may have become miscommunication. Also, having scheduled times for building and grade level meetings gave people a time for which they knew questions could be held (p.89-95). This provided people with reassurance that their issues were important to their leader.

Clearly, having teachers visit each others classes impacted change on many levels (Elmore, 2000; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Spillane, 1999; Senge et. al., 1999; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Sykes, 1996). Teachers became more of a team but they also began to agree on ways of instructing the children. Because a decision was made early on to visit all rooms, every individual was put in the position of learner. After several visits, when teachers saw that they weren't being judged or being compared to each other, the time could be used to introduce new things.

As a principal, I learned that good pedagogy has a power of its own. Carol, of twenty-five years, saw Holly teach in a way that she knew would reach her students (p. 91-93). Although I had talked to her about more engaging practices, it wasn't until she actually saw them with children that she began to think it was possible with her children. The stories of Jefferson School note how a change in the reading program meant that structures like ability grouping, round robin reading and drill and practice would need to change (p. 89-95). But, teachers could not simply be told to do these things. It would take coaching, watching others and trial and error. All of that requires some chaos within the structure.

Teachers are complex people, and as a leader, their differences must be embraced. That doesn't mean, however, that everything is tolerated or permitted. The agreed upon curriculum and agreed upon purposes for schooling must always provide the overarching parameters for individual actions. So, as a leader, exhibiting the flexibility to deal with individual differences but the rigidity to uphold the organizations ideals was frequently needed.

***CHALLENGE 4: Because substantial change involves confusion, problem situations, anxiety, difficulty and uncertainty, how does a leader deal with human emotion?***

Coming from other schools, when I first visited Jefferson School, I was appalled by what I saw – broken equipment, weeds, trash and a facility in disrepair. But that was nothing compared to the broken spirits within the school. Although very little time within formal school leadership training is spent on dealing with human emotions, much of my time as a leader within a struggling school was spent doing just that.

Initially, the negativity at Jefferson School was almost insurmountable. People knew little else than blame, hostility and anger (p.69-76). Because of their troubled past, I came to see that there was a “victims’ mentality” at Jefferson School (Baker & Greenberg, 2006; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Farber, 1991). Staff would need convinced and encouraged that they had the power within themselves to make their environment different – a place that would nurture each other and the children they were hired to serve (p. 69-76).

At Jefferson School, dealing with the negative emotions that were so embedded in the culture was a frustration. Even when gains and improvements were significant, a small problem might circle a wave of negativity and pessimism that would last for days or weeks. A pattern of doom and despair was all too familiar, but a pattern of triumph and celebration was very new (p. 89-91). The rituals and routines of celebration that I had taken for granted in my previous schools would need to be learned and rehearsed at Jefferson School if it were to move forward (Barth, 2003; Deal & Peterson, 1999; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Kouzes & Posner, 1993). Leadership would be needed for this

task but leadership solely from one leader would not be enough. Instead, teachers, students and parents would need to help address problems as a group and learn to become self-renewing (p. 111-116).

During a time of learning, many emotions rise to the surface. Among others is uncertainty when taking risks, defeat when things don't work and elation when things do (Senge et. al., 2000; Thomlinson, 1999; Resnick, 1999; Wiggins & McTigue, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Gardner, 1983). All change, whether self imposed or brought on by others, involves some degree of struggle (Fullan, 1993; Sarason, 1990; Peters, 1987; Marris, 1975). Embracing new ideas means letting go of others.

As the stories illustrate, when an organization experiences a major emotional upheaval, emotions follow suit. People react to change in a variety of ways. Some teachers like Mike (p. 73-74) became vocal and hostile. Others like Gail (p. 74-76) began to learn new ways of thinking and quickly reached out to others. Almost weekly, Ana and I mediated disagreements between teachers, between students and teachers or between parents and teachers (p. 114-116). When people work together closely in a social setting, their struggles and challenges frequently become intertwined with others. As the story of LaKeisha and Ms. King illustrated (p. 69-71), even a topic such as parenting could become charged. In an environment where hostility had prevailed for many years, familiar patterns of negative interaction and verbal sparring could easily creep back into day-to-day interactions. As the narratives noted, leadership was needed to challenge this negative way of dealing with peers and encourage mutual respect and professional collegiality.

As a principal, one's own emotions are certainly front and center. People look to the leader, sometimes simply because of title, for direction and support. I found it was beneficial to reflect on my own emotions. There were times when I was tired, angry or frustrated. I didn't want important decisions to spring from moments where I was less than my best. Sometimes, it is much easier to see in others, what we can't see in ourselves. As a leader, frequently stepping back to examine my own array of emotions was extremely revealing and valuable. On many occasions, I recognized the struggles of others quickly within my own struggles.

***CHALLENGE 5: With so many competing values, how can building level leaders keep learning at the heart of school reform?***

Given the multiple demands on principals, leading an organization to focus on learning is a challenge (Hallinger, 2000; Wallace, 1996; Barth, 1991; Duke, 1987). Instructional leadership requires that building leaders facilitate a culture for learning within their building. As the stories illustrate (p. 89-95), many leadership behaviors can contribute to this outcome.

Setting goals, collaborating with others, making suggestions, giving feedback, teaming with experts, facilitating professional development activities and giving praise are all examples of instructional leadership that the stories from Jefferson School bring forth (p. 89-95). The challenge is that many of these activities compete with the varied management tasks of principals – scheduling, discipline, and facilities management among others. It is extremely easy for principals, particularly within challenged environments, to get caught up in various activities that take the focus off of instruction.

One way to have teachers begin to look at instruction yet not require the principal's time in the manner that it takes for clinical one-on-one supervision, is to use authentic data as a place to begin conversations and generate questions. As the narratives illustrate (p. 89-95) Data Days, grade level meetings and inservice activities that centered around data led to discussion on instruction. From there, people could enter conversations as they became ready- either because others were wanting to know more about their practices or because there were new things they were wanting to learn.

Once teachers see that growth will occur with change, school improvement can call up a balance of learning from within as well as connecting to expertise outside the organization (Elmore, 2002, 2000; Fullan, 1999, 1993; DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Because of the partnership with the university and because the school district was in School Improvement, opportunities for quality staff development were easily accessed. This is not always the case in school districts. My job, as a leader would have been much more difficult if I would have had to seek out, obtain and assess my own partners for professional development.

At Jefferson School, the resources that were available for teacher learning were invaluable to me as a principal. I came into school administration after nineteen years as a classroom and Instructional Support teacher. Instruction was my passion and I loved thinking and talking about pedagogy. My work with the Pitt team, the IFL and the RAC were among some of the best professional development opportunities of my twenty-five year career. I felt enriched as a learner and I'm sure I shared that enthusiasm for learning with teachers.

When I came to Jefferson School, there was certainly work to do. I frequently heard the rumblings from years of tracking and a watered down curriculum. Many teachers didn't believe that all students could learn and should have access to the same rigorous curriculum (Senge et. al., 1999; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Goodlad, 1984; Lortie, 1975). Some resisted higher order tasks like problem-solving exercises, making excuses that children didn't yet know their facts. Others wanted struggling readers to always have lower-level books and less challenging stories. Some argued that children couldn't manage science materials and should use a book instead of hands-on science activities. Many staff members were in favor of punitive grades for behavior and using the threat of retentions. All of these attitudes revealed a traditional focus on teaching and specifically what the adults were doing. As the stories note (p. 89-95), slowly we moved to a child-centered school where the focus was on learning and what the students were doing. While the real change occurs between teacher and child, the narratives illustrate how support and pushing from the principal can move the process along.

As much as I loved learning and instruction, I couldn't devote all my time at Jefferson School to that area. Particularly within the urban setting, pressing needs related to management arose daily and needed addressed (Orr et. al., 2005; Kozol, 2005; Crosby, 1999). There were facilitates issues such as heating and plumbing, student issues such as attendance and discipline, and the paperwork that comes with School Improvement - all of which impact learning if they are not addressed. At Jefferson School, one way for me to devote time to both instruction and management was to use the time in the early morning and the late afternoon for building needs. That



left the hours between, minus the lunch hour, for focusing on instruction. If situations did occur during the other times of the day, the office team was used as a holding tank until a classroom visit or Learning Walk was over (p. 69-76).

I was also fortunate to have others around me who shared a passion for learning. I had Ana (p.114-116), the new Child Study Coordinator and the new coaches (p. 93-95) who liked nothing more than to talk about students and classrooms. A principal cannot be in every classroom every day. Yet, a principal can't be absent from classrooms and expect that the most optimal learning will always take place. The stories of Jefferson School illustrate how challenging it is for a principal to find that balance.

***CHALLENGE 6: If neither top-down nor bottom-up strategies of leadership are effective, is leadership needed?***

At the time when I agreed to become the building principal at Jefferson School, the school was struggling and had many needs. The portrayals in this study reveal that while leadership was only one of a host of factors that changed at Jefferson School, it was one factor that affected change. As the stories illustrate, a change in leadership initially began to chip away at the cycle of negativity and adult-centered practice that had a long-standing history at the school (p. 69-76, p. 89-95). Yet, leadership, in this case, could not be the task of one person. While change occurs one person at a time, collective change was needed in replacing a toxic culture with a productive one (Kouzes & Posner, 1993; Deal & Petersom, 1999; DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

The stories illustrate how meeting as teams and grade levels and empowering people like Gail, Jen and Josephine to take charge of recess, in school suspension and Student Council began to build a culture of collaboration and collegiality (p. 71-76, 89-91). The stories also show how it frequently was the principal's role to bring groups together and negotiate through ideas and disagreements especially because structures were not in place to agree or disagree professionally. These accounts of key moments (p. 69-76, 89-95, 111-116) describe how principals dance in and out of the cycle of change, sometimes taking the lead, other times being the follower, all the while advocating for the child.

In a setting like Jefferson School, after teamwork was established instructional leadership was desperately needed. Students were not learning. The school had a long-standing history of failing test scores and low achievement. The principal's role in this case was to model learning and make instruction the overreaching essential question within the building. Frequently, because of the social structure of schools, teachers close their doors and answer only to themselves (Elmore, 2002, 2000; Goodlad, 1984; Lortie, 1975). Leadership is needed if the doors to classrooms are to be opened, the lines in the hallways to be blurred and decision-making to be shared. Good instruction breeds more good instruction. When teacher's pedagogy becomes rewarding and their instruction increases the quality and level of student performance, they become more willing to entertain new ideas and grow (Dufour & Eaker, 2005, 1998; Elmore, 2002, 2000; Barth, 1990).

Leadership is also needed when advocating for individual children. As the stories note, seeing that students with the most specific needs have access to the

people and the resources they need is one of the tasks of a principal (p. 69-76, p. 89-95). Many times the best and brightest teachers go to the best and brightest students-creating an even bigger gap for children as they travel throughout a school system. Leadership is frequently needed to encourage the finest teachers to take the neediest children.

In a struggling school the principal may be needed to mediate emotions. Within challenged environments, where people work closely together, emotions become charged and intertwined (Kearney & Hyde, 2003; Farber, 1991; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Marris, 1995). Sometimes someone is needed to bring people together to talk through issues and come to resolution (p. 69-71). Being a leader in any setting takes energy and enthusiasm but in one with fragile emotions, it also takes authenticity- an ability to be ones self- even if that means there is a difference from those around them. The stories of LaKeisha, Josephine and LaQuanna reflect that staff and students would respond to my calls to respond to communicate in positive ways and accept my individuality when they knew I accepted theirs (p. 69-71, p. 71-73, p.111-116).

Being immersed in a culture other than my own, for me, was enlightening and engaging. As the stories illustrate, the more I shared with students and families, the more they gave back to me (p.111-114). I visited homes, went to sporting events and became involved in a community I grew to really enjoy. Those activities helped me to learn, on many levels, more about the students and families I was serving.

As much as was possible, within an urban environment, the principal must provide a sense of stability. From the surrounding context, violence, aggression and other issues of poverty impact children and parents (National Center for Children in

Poverty, 2007; Crosby, 1999; Payne, 1998; Tyak & Cuban, 1995). A building leader has to be cognizant of the environmental factors that impact children and be sensitive to the outside dysfunction that students carry into school. The stories note how strong the urge in urban schools is, to want to be more about control than creativity and learning (p. 89-95). Creativity doesn't mean that a school is devoid of structure. It just means that different structures – ones that allow grouping, hands-on activities and student exploration are created. This is frequently a difficult task and requires perseverance, creativity, and stamina, as well as flexibility, predictability and passion on the part of the building principal.

Because I was not a teacher within the district, I recognized that to many, initially I was an outsider, one of many who came to “fix” them. Teachers would have to see from working with me on a daily basis that in a child-centered school, all are leaders. While there were ideas and ways of thinking that I would lead them to, there were others to which they would lead me (p. 69-76, p. 89-95). And in this back and forth exchange, we would ask and assess what impact our actions had on students. These were basic decision-making and operating assumptions that we'd have to establish together.

Leadership is important in the building of workplace relationships (Barth, 2003; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Kouzes & Posner, 1993). The value that a leader places on respecting differences, entertaining varying points of view and being willing to learn from failure as well as success models those ideals for the entire organization. Sometimes being a leader means making a stand less supported or even standing alone – all which may be necessary in the process of achieving change. In our current structure of

schooling, the definition of leadership continues to grow. While direction and participation are both needed from principals, parents and teachers will also be asked to contribute to the task of leading our schools to success.

### **The Challenges of Change Summarized**

The following chart summarizes the avenues that were used at Jefferson School to address the challenges of change that presented during this particular instance of school reform. The stories elaborated on the complex nature of these practices and their many loops and turns.

| <b>Avenues Supporting Change at Jefferson School</b>   |
|--|
| <b><i>Challenge 1: If leaders cannot get people to change simply by telling them what to do, what moves people to change?</i></b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating opportunities where staff can learn together about issues and possible solutions</li> <li>• Addressing the emotional needs of adults related to the change process</li> <li>• Developing core values within the organization</li> <li>• Building personal relationships</li> <li>• Sharing the stories of change with the entire group</li> <li>• Keeping a level of professionalism among staff</li> <li>• Sharing the leader's emotions and perceptions when asking others to do so</li> </ul> |
| <b><i>Challenge 2: If leadership cannot predetermine the path of change, how can people be prepared for the journey?</i></b>   |

- Establishing frequent and productive lines of communication
- Keeping routines whenever possible
- Building on the strength of individual staff members
- Filling key positions with the best instructors
- Maintaining an open climate of inquiry
- Discouraging the isolation of teachers

***Challenge 3: Since productive educational reform usually falls somewhere between control and chaos, how does a leader negotiate that balance?***

- Establishing a core group of teacher leaders
- Piloting ideas and practices
- Challenging negative practices
- Learning new practices in concert with others
- Establishing predictable lines of communication
- Accepting individuality when it contributes to group goals

***Challenge 4: Because substantial change involves confusion, problem situations, anxiety, difficulty and uncertainty, how does a leader deal with human emotion?***

- Encouraging adults to explore successful practices
- Establishing a positive climate
- Celebrating successes
- Acknowledging the emotions of change
- Challenging negativity and unprofessional ways of interacting

***Challenge 5: With so many competing values, how can building level leaders keep learning at the heart of school reform?***

- Setting academic goals
- Analyzing data with teachers
- Using expertise within organization in combination with expertise from the outside
- Visiting classrooms
- Meeting in collaborative groups
- Empowering others to support instruction

***Challenge 6: If neither top-down nor bottom-up strategies of leadership are effective, is leadership needed?***

- Building a culture of collaboration and collegiality
- Modeling instruction and learning
- Advocating for individual children
- Mediating emotions
- Providing stability
- Encouraging creativity

**Reflecting on the Key Moments**

When taking a look back at the moments documented in Chapter 4, one can correctly assume that there were many other incidents and moments of change that were journaled but yet not storied for the narratives. As a researcher, I chose to bring forth moments that represented a shift in thinking or behavior. For leaders, these key

moments describe authentic actions and reactions to the change process and the push of the building leadership. Taken as a whole, the stories portray what a time of change can look like within a school organization experiencing new leadership.

New leaders, particularly those within struggling environments may be able to recognize moments like these within their organizations for all the complexities and challenges that they hold and also to indicate to them that change may be in the wings. An awareness that all new learning creates some conflict and inconsistency with prior thinking is important when moving through a time of change. Uncertainty and some degree of resistance will likely surface in most initiatives of change. Leaders need to remain encouraged and wait out the period of turmoil before new ideas are rejected. Looking for their own ‘key moments of change’ and interpreting and sharing the stories within their organization can be a process that building leaders can use to navigate through the challenging period surrounding reform.

### **A Leader Changed**

Within one August week in 2003, I went from a school with terrazzo floors, an atrium and a themed playground to bars, graffiti and overgrown weeds. This simple step out of the halls of a thriving suburban elementary school and into the doorway of a troubled urban school, put me on a challenging yet invigorating experience of school leadership. My journey, along with the research I devoted to study this topic, leaves me as a leader changed and challenged by a host of complex issues.

When I came to Jefferson School, I had a rather narrow view of leadership. Clearly that view has grown and expanded with as many questions surfacing as



contributions. From leading in very different settings, I have come to see how context puts limits and demands on leadership. I came to Jefferson School believing that all children regardless of race, disability or gender have the right to learn. But that would look very different in a place where those around me didn't agree – where a paycheck and a contract had ruled for so many years.

As I began to pour into the work of the principalship at Jefferson School, I found my inspiration. Some of the poorest and most forgotten children in the region opened up their hearts and pulled me in. Their humor, curiosity, creativity and unconditional love made me look forward to every day. Thinking about the child-centered school that they deserved challenged me to link up with a few kindred spirits and begin a path of change. Throughout my three-year period at Jefferson School, I frequently shared that the principalship was giving me much more than I was giving it. I was working harder than I had ever worked in my life. But I was laughing louder, hugging harder and sleeping more soundly because I felt my work and the work of the other adults around me was making a difference in the lives of children. For me, a purpose and meaning for work was being realized at Jefferson School and that brought much in the way of personal and professional satisfaction.

Urban school administration is difficult and daunting. As my study revealed, the challenges are complex and sometimes at odds with each other. There are no easy answers for most problems and as soon as one problem is addressed another surfaces. But establishing core values and being willing to try and retry in the name of students can begin to make a difference. Because of my time at Jefferson School, I believe that every school in the land holds the power to provide an appropriate education for each of

its children. I'm saddened that some schools and some school people choose to dismiss or misuse their power. I look to a day where school years are treasured and valued by all.

My years in Fairfield also taught me that even in the most challenged of places, there are those who want to make things better. Once teachers were treated with respect and their input was validated, I was amazed at their fortitude and determination. With just a small amount of encouragement, adults began to band together and challenge some of the long-standing structures and routines of their peers. In the Jefferson School context, that was not any easy thing to do and a sign of my staff's own inner strengths and their individual rise to leadership. Their courage and willingness to change, in spite of all they had been through, still amazes me. The power of the human spirit is captivating and a joy for a leader to watch.

I have also come to think that being a strong leader is very much being willing to be a diligent learner. Solving problems and addressing issues means first learning as much as you can about the issues and problems. It then means learning as much as you can about the people who are working with the problem or issue. From there, solutions can be matched to the appropriate problems and people. Learning occurs in concert with others so groups or teams who work on issues are generally much more efficient than one single person. However, leadership is needed to facilitate and monitor the processes so collective rather than individual interests are served.

Of course, when thinking about learning, I immediately switch my focus to the students. The social injustice that continues to plague them and their community disturbs me. Spending time in Fairfield has challenged me personally, as a school

administrator and child advocate, to join in conversations and search for avenues to bring resources to the neediest among us. As I drove into Fairfield each day, I repeatedly asked myself how children in some communities have so much and in others communities have so little. Politicians, educators and community leaders must work together to understand and address the pressing needs of children within urban education systems like Fairfield. These children cannot continue to be ignored. One way or another, schools shape our future. The children at Jefferson School are among the leaders of tomorrow and our caregivers. As a school administrator, I am concerned that we are not aggressively working to find avenues to attract and keep quality teachers, expert leaders and a host of experts to work with these students. I fear that our children will not be prepared for society and the larger world they will soon join as young adults.

My experience also makes me consider how we can grow new leadership in schools. I think about the model that we used with an intern principal and how we might work creatively to give other young people the opportunity to spend time with someone of experience and learn about leading. I also think about the wonderful opportunity that an experience with a young person gives a seasoned leader to reflect and share their experiences. I know the experience was a time of growth for me.

Over and over, my position at Jefferson School needed me to call up my past experience. Time and again, experience was my saving grace, yet many principals and teachers only know one environment. I am left thinking about how teachers and administrators can see and experience models other than their own and how we can begin to get those who have never been in other settings to understand their demands.

There are many Jefferson Schools just waiting to be a learning opportunity. What a personal learning curve for me the three years at Jefferson School were.

### **Implications for Further Study**

Examining the challenges of leadership from the experience of a single building principal during a single instance of reform has provided a vivid account of the complex nature of leading during change. The very complexity of this topic lends itself to additional study and exploration. Knowing that leadership is a product of the context and the individual, the stories of other contexts and other leaders is a valuable source of data about the people and the environments associated with school leadership. As leaders describe, share and interpret their individual accounts of leading, valuable information and insights into the role can be collected and studied. In addition to leaders, the stories of teachers, parents and students are also important, particularly as told from their points of view. As we expand our current definitions of leadership to include parents and teachers, a look into their roles, and their implications for schools will be important.

Along with the context, this study has documented the emotions and attitudes of leaders and the people who work with them as they navigate through a time of change. As school leaders learn more about the human side of leading, collaboration with experts and researchers from related fields such as psychology and business management will provide valuable insight and additional understandings as leaders balance instructional leadership with the human interpersonal side of supervision. Perhaps from working with those in related fields, school leaders can explore additional

ways to build relationships and meet the needs of adults while they are addressing the needs of children.

In addition, more research is needed on how to prepare leaders who may be preparing to serve in toxic cultures. Presented with unique challenges, these leaders need to learn about existing and theoretical models of practice that have implications for their work. Finally, the structures and content for training and on-going staff development for principals is an area that can continued to be explored, especially as we begin to bring up the next generation of school leaders.

## EPILOGUE

Two years have passed since I left Jefferson Elementary School. In 2006, the PSDI project was coming to an end. A new superintendent was hired to lead Fairfield. Within weeks, I could see that the new leadership favored a traditional top-down system of control. Believing that people operate best under a system of shared values, I felt Fairfield was no longer a fit for me. In June of 2006, I left the district for a central office position in an outlying county. The new district's guiding statement of "effort creates ability" was much more congruent with my child-centered philosophy that we should all work cooperatively to make all children learners.

Ana took over the reigns as principal of Jefferson School, but left in November for reasons similar to mine. Although I am no longer the leader at Jefferson School, I frequently feel not very far from it, either. Almost weekly I get an email or a phone call from one of the teachers. They talk about their new principal whom they compare to Ms. Jackson. They describe the return to a traditional system of control and conformity. Most extra activities have ceased and people talk about getting out or reveal the number of months or years to retirement. Their accounts sadden me. I am distressed that these good people again have become victims of a negative system.

The cast of characters at Jefferson School has dramatically changed:

- Lakeisha is no longer the building secretary. Clashing with the new principal, she was forced to resign over a bookkeeping issue. A new assistant was brought in by the principal.

- Mike and Josephine both retired. Acquaintances of the new superintendent replaced them.
- Gail is still at Jefferson School, teaching physical education. She was taken off the office team and the superintendent's wife was given her position.
- Jen resigned and is teaching Emotional Support in an adjoining district. She keeps in touch the most regularly.
- Mandy is still at Jefferson School teaching fifth grade. She says she closes her door and gets her support from the kids.
- Ted left for another building with a more child-centered principal. Paulette resigned and went to another district as a literacy coach.
- Carol has two more years of second grade. Then, she says she'll happily retire.
- LaQuanna couldn't keep afloat at the Middle School without the support. After getting into numerous fights, she was put in the alternative school.
- Ana has moved to a county to the north. She is the principal of a successful K-4 school with almost 900 students.

Along with the changes in key people, many of the teachers who were with me at Jefferson School have left the building or the district saying that they couldn't cope with the return to negativity. Most of them say they have no regrets about coming to Fairfield and that their experience at Jefferson School made them better teachers and people. They share that they learned to reach kids who carried significant barriers to school and, in learning to deal with them, they now can deal more effectively with all kids. I just received an email and a set of wedding pictures from one young pair of teachers who shared that the Jefferson School experience is something they professionally and

personally value. Hearing that Jefferson School had a positive influence on these young people, makes the hard work and struggles well worth the effort.

Sadly, amid all the changes it is the children who remain at Jefferson School tossed again into another tumultuous ride through the educational system. Their experience is very different from children in surrounding districts who build relationships with principals, teachers and support staff for upwards of twenty years. I wonder what will happen to these young people whose education and early formative years have gone through so much turmoil. I wonder if they will ever get to have the childhood experiences they are missing.

In my new district, again I face the “challenges of change.” I am immersed in a much different culture here. My current district has maintained very good test scores over the years. Teachers work hard and an abundance of extra support programs are provided for the struggling student. Most students achieve to proficiency levels, including the subgroups of students with disabilities and students from poverty. Parents and teachers partner and home-school relationships are strong and supportive. Yet, in many ways this district is even more resistant to change than Fairfield. Thinking that few others do as well as them, the culture has evolved into one of thinking that there is little to learn. People frequently talk about knowing more than the experts and not benefiting from training or staff development.

However, a careful look into the system shows a plateauing or leveling out at proficiency. While wide spread reform is certainly not needed within this successful district, there is work to do. A walk through the halls will reveal that traditional teaching techniques are the norm and higher levels of analytical reading, problem solving and



authentic learning are not as frequent as the “sit and get” lessons that abound. Building principals are often more comfortable being managers than instructional leaders. Teachers make most pedagogical decisions in isolation without seeing each other teach. The number of advanced students is flat reflecting the lack of higher order tasks and inquiry based learning that comes from a learning enriched environment.

And again, as at Jefferson School, there are pockets of teachers and principals who are ready to do more. They’ve read up on the latest research and feel the demand to get students ready for the changing global workforce. From my work on curriculum and with other initiatives, I am learning who those individuals are. Once more, I am searching for ways to navigate around the “challenges of change” with these key people and lead my new district to explore additional ways of thinking and learning.

## **1.0 APPENDIX A – SURVEYS**

This section contains surveys that were distributed and reviewed with staff and teachers at Jefferson Elementary during the three-year period of this study.

The first survey was given district-wide to all teachers at the end of each school year. It contains district information as well as a section that reports information for Jefferson School only. The questions were generated at the district level by the 2000 School Improvement Team and had been given for several years before I arrived as well as during each year that I served as the principal. Teachers responded anonymously and the results were tallied. The summary provided was shared with all stakeholders.

The other surveys in this section were given within the building at the end of the 2003-04 year. The questions on this survey were generated by the Core Team. They were distributed in an effort to get information regarding the building climate. All teachers in the building were given the surveys anonymously. Students and parents in grades 5 and 6 were also given surveys anonymously. The results were tallied and reviewed with the Core Team.

Exhibit A.1 - District Survey

Wilkinsburg School District  
Teacher Survey Results

|   | 2000 |    |    |    |       |       |    |    |    |    | 2004 |   |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   | 2005  |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |
|---|------|----|----|----|-------|-------|----|----|----|----|------|---|-------|-------|----|----|----|---|----|---|-------|-------|----|----|----|---|----|---|-------|-------|
|   | K    | T  | J  | H  | Total | %     | K  | T  | J  | M  | H    | A | Total | %     | K  | T  | J  | M | H  | A | Total | %     | K  | T  | J  | M | H  | A | Total | %     |
| No. Of Respondents  | 15   | 20 | 23 | 23 | 81    |       | 20 | 23 | 23 | 12 | 22   | 3 | 103   |       | 25 | 17 | 14 | 8 | 20 | 4 | 88    |       | 25 | 17 | 14 | 8 | 20 | 4 | 88    |       |
| 9. Does your school have a problem with tardiness?  |      |    |    |    |       |       |    |    |    |    |      |   |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |
| Yes   | 14   | 18 | 22 | 22 | 76    | 96.2% | 19 | 22 | 23 | 11 | 22   | 3 | 100   | 99.0% | 22 | 14 | 13 | 7 | 19 | 4 | 79    | 94.0% | 22 | 14 | 13 | 7 | 19 | 4 | 79    | 94.0% |
| No  | 1    | 0  | 1  | 1  | 3     | 3.8%  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0    | 0 | 1     | 1.0%  | 3  | 1  | 0  | 0 | 1  | 0 | 5     | 6.0%  | 3  | 1  | 0  | 0 | 1  | 0 | 5     | 6.0%  |
| 10. Does your school have a problem with tenancy?   |      |    |    |    |       |       |    |    |    |    |      |   |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |
| Yes   | 8    | 15 | 20 | 20 | 63    | 84.0% | 9  | 10 | 14 | 9  | 21   | 3 | 66    | 73.3% | 18 | 9  | 11 | 6 | 19 | 3 | 66    | 80.5% | 18 | 9  | 11 | 6 | 19 | 3 | 66    | 80.5% |
| No  | 7    | 1  | 2  | 2  | 12    | 16.0% | 8  | 9  | 5  | 1  | 1    | 0 | 24    | 26.7% | 7  | 6  | 0  | 1 | 1  | 1 | 16    | 19.5% | 7  | 6  | 0  | 1 | 1  | 1 | 16    | 19.5% |
| 11. Does your school consistently enforce the district's discipline plan?   |      |    |    |    |       |       |    |    |    |    |      |   |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |
| Yes   | 6    | 3  | 8  | 5  | 22    | 27.8% | 10 | 12 | 6  | 1  | 12   | 1 | 42    | 43.8% | 5  | 7  | 9  | 0 | 10 | 3 | 34    | 40.5% | 5  | 7  | 9  | 0 | 10 | 3 | 34    | 40.5% |
| No  | 9    | 17 | 14 | 17 | 57    | 72.2% | 9  | 11 | 11 | 11 | 10   | 2 | 54    | 56.3% | 20 | 8  | 5  | 7 | 9  | 1 | 50    | 59.5% | 20 | 8  | 5  | 7 | 9  | 1 | 50    | 59.5% |
| 12. To what extent did discipline problems disrupt instruction in your classroom?   |      |    |    |    |       |       |    |    |    |    |      |   |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |
| A Great Deal  | 9    | 10 | 6  | 14 | 39    | 50.6% | 7  | 6  | 1  | 6  | 3    | 2 | 25    | 24.5% | 6  | 5  | 0  | 3 | 6  | 2 | 22    | 25.9% | 6  | 5  | 0  | 3 | 6  | 2 | 22    | 25.9% |
| Somewhat  | 5    | 8  | 13 | 7  | 33    | 42.9% | 11 | 14 | 15 | 6  | 14   | 1 | 61    | 59.8% | 14 | 8  | 11 | 3 | 11 | 2 | 49    | 57.6% | 14 | 8  | 11 | 3 | 11 | 2 | 49    | 57.6% |
| Not At All  | 0    | 1  | 4  | 0  | 5     | 6.5%  | 2  | 2  | 7  | 0  | 5    | 0 | 16    | 15.7% | 4  | 4  | 2  | 1 | 3  | 0 | 14    | 16.5% | 4  | 4  | 2  | 1 | 3  | 0 | 14    | 16.5% |
| 14. Do you believe student achievement will improve if the school day is extended?  |      |    |    |    |       |       |    |    |    |    |      |   |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |
| Yes   | 2    | 3  | 2  | 2  | 9     | 11.5% | 2  | 3  | 3  | 0  | 8    | 0 | 16    | 16.0% | 1  | 2  | 4  | 0 | 8  | 0 | 15    | 18.3% | 1  | 2  | 4  | 0 | 8  | 0 | 15    | 18.3% |
| No  | 12   | 15 | 21 | 20 | 68    | 87.2% | 18 | 19 | 20 | 12 | 12   | 3 | 84    | 84.0% | 24 | 15 | 10 | 7 | 10 | 1 | 67    | 81.7% | 24 | 15 | 10 | 7 | 10 | 1 | 67    | 81.7% |
| Maybe   | 0    | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1     | 1.3%  |    |    |    |    |      |   |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |
| 17. Do you agree or disagree that special needs students in your school are meeting with a high degree of success in regular education classes? |      |    |    |    |       |       |    |    |    |    |      |   |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |
| Strongly Agree  | 0    | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1     | 1.3%  | 1  | 0  | 3  | 0  | 1    | 0 | 5     | 4.5%  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0 | 1  | 0 | 1     | 1.2%  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0 | 1  | 0 | 1     | 1.2%  |
| Agree   | 1    | 3  | 5  | 6  | 15    | 19.7% | 4  | 4  | 12 | 1  | 17   | 1 | 39    | 35.5% | 11 | 8  | 5  | 4 | 4  | 3 | 35    | 40.7% | 11 | 8  | 5  | 4 | 4  | 3 | 35    | 40.7% |
| Disagree  | 9    | 10 | 8  | 11 | 38    | 50.0% | 8  | 10 | 7  | 8  | 10   | 1 | 44    | 40.0% | 8  | 2  | 6  | 1 | 12 | 0 | 29    | 33.7% | 8  | 2  | 6  | 1 | 12 | 0 | 29    | 33.7% |
| Strongly Disagree   | 4    | 5  | 7  | 6  | 22    | 28.9% | 6  | 8  | 1  | 3  | 3    | 1 | 22    | 20.0% | 6  | 7  | 3  | 2 | 2  | 1 | 21    | 24.4% | 6  | 7  | 3  | 2 | 2  | 1 | 21    | 24.4% |
| 21. Should one element of a professional development program include observing "best practice" teachers from within the district?               |      |    |    |    |       |       |    |    |    |    |      |   |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |
| Yes   | 11   | 19 | 20 | 19 | 69    | 87.3% | 17 | 18 | 16 | 12 | 17   | 2 | 82    | 82.8% | 19 | 12 | 7  | 6 | 18 | 2 | 64    | 76.2% | 19 | 12 | 7  | 6 | 18 | 2 | 64    | 76.2% |
| No  | 4    | 1  | 3  | 2  | 10    | 12.7% | 1  | 5  | 5  | 0  | 5    | 1 | 17    | 17.2% | 6  | 5  | 6  | 0 | 1  | 2 | 20    | 23.8% | 6  | 5  | 6  | 0 | 1  | 2 | 20    | 23.8% |
| 22. Should one element of a professional development program include observing "best practice" teachers from other districts?                   |      |    |    |    |       |       |    |    |    |    |      |   |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |
| Yes   | 14   | 19 | 19 | 19 | 71    | 91.0% | 17 | 17 | 10 | 12 | 19   | 2 | 77    | 76.2% | 20 | 13 | 7  | 5 | 16 | 4 | 65    | 77.4% | 20 | 13 | 7  | 5 | 16 | 4 | 65    | 77.4% |
| No  | 0    | 1  | 4  | 2  | 7     | 9.0%  | 3  | 5  | 12 | 0  | 3    | 1 | 24    | 23.8% | 5  | 4  | 6  | 1 | 3  | 0 | 19    | 22.6% | 5  | 4  | 6  | 1 | 3  | 0 | 19    | 22.6% |
| 24. Overall, is the Wilkinsburg School District on the right track or the wrong track when it comes to improving academic performance?          |      |    |    |    |       |       |    |    |    |    |      |   |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |
| Right Track   | 7    | 16 | 16 | 14 | 53    | 67.1% | 16 | 20 | 14 | 2  | 19   | 1 | 72    | 70.6% | 22 | 14 | 11 | 1 | 13 | 3 | 64    | 73.6% | 22 | 14 | 11 | 1 | 13 | 3 | 64    | 73.6% |
| Wrong Track   | 2    | 0  | 4  | 3  | 9     | 11.4% | 1  | 1  | 3  | 8  | 0    | 0 | 13    | 12.7% | 1  | 0  | 1  | 0 | 1  | 0 | 3     | 3.4%  | 1  | 0  | 1  | 0 | 1  | 0 | 3     | 3.4%  |
| Unsure/No Opinion   | 6    | 4  | 1  | 6  | 17    | 21.5% | 3  | 2  | 5  | 2  | 3    | 2 | 17    | 16.7% | 2  | 3  | 2  | 6 | 6  | 1 | 20    | 23.0% | 2  | 3  | 2  | 6 | 6  | 1 | 20    | 23.0% |

Exhibit A.1 - District Survey

|   | 2000 |    |    |    |       | 2004  |    |    |    |    | 2005 |   |       |       |       |
|---|------|----|----|----|-------|-------|----|----|----|----|------|---|-------|-------|-------|
|   | K    | T  | J  | H  | Total | %     | K  | T  | J  | M  | H    | A | Total | %     | Total |
| 25. Academic standards set high expectations for what students should know and be able to do. |      |    |    |    |       |       |    |    |    |    |      |   |       |       |       |
| Strongly Disagree   | 0    | 1  | 1  | 5  | 7     | 8.8%  | 2  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 2    | 1 | 6     | 6.0%  | 2     |
| Disagree  | 5    | 0  | 4  | 9  | 18    | 22.5% | 2  | 2  | 1  | 3  | 7    | 0 | 15    | 15.0% | 8     |
| Agree   | 7    | 17 | 13 | 9  | 46    | 57.5% | 12 | 14 | 16 | 7  | 12   | 2 | 63    | 63.0% | 62    |
| Strongly Agree  | 3    | 2  | 4  | 0  | 9     | 11.3% | 4  | 6  | 6  | 0  | 0    | 0 | 16    | 16.0% | 13    |
| 26. I have been offered adequate training in teaching to the standards.                       |      |    |    |    |       |       |    |    |    |    |      |   |       |       |       |
| Strongly Disagree   | 1    | 0  | 2  | 0  | 3     | 3.9%  | 1  | 2  | 0  | 1  | 0    | 0 | 5     | 4.9%  | 3     |
| Disagree  | 4    | 7  | 7  | 10 | 28    | 36.4% | 6  | 1  | 4  | 1  | 3    | 1 | 16    | 15.7% | 12    |
| Agree   | 10   | 12 | 11 | 10 | 43    | 55.8% | 10 | 13 | 12 | 10 | 16   | 0 | 61    | 59.8% | 55    |
| Strongly Agree  | 0    | 0  | 2  | 1  | 3     | 3.9%  | 3  | 7  | 7  | 0  | 2    | 1 | 20    | 19.6% | 13    |
| 27. I have been offered adequate training in assessing student performance against standards. |      |    |    |    |       |       |    |    |    |    |      |   |       |       |       |
| Strongly Disagree   | 1    | 1  | 2  | 2  | 6     | 8.0%  | 1  | 2  | 0  | 1  | 0    | 2 | 6     | 5.9%  | 1     |
| Disagree  | 5    | 9  | 5  | 9  | 28    | 37.3% | 7  | 5  | 8  | 3  | 6    | 0 | 29    | 28.4% | 22    |
| Agree   | 7    | 8  | 13 | 10 | 38    | 50.7% | 12 | 13 | 11 | 8  | 14   | 0 | 58    | 56.9% | 47    |
| Strongly Agree  | 0    | 0  | 3  | 0  | 3     | 4.0%  | 0  | 3  | 3  | 0  | 2    | 1 | 9     | 8.8%  | 14    |
| 28. I am satisfied with my school's curriculum.   |      |    |    |    |       |       |    |    |    |    |      |   |       |       |       |
| Strongly Disagree   | 3    | 0  | 11 | 5  | 19    | 23.8% | 2  | 3  | 1  | 7  | 12   | 1 | 26    | 23.9% | 7     |
| Disagree  | 9    | 9  | 7  | 8  | 33    | 41.3% | 9  | 8  | 15 | 3  | 12   | 1 | 48    | 44.0% | 23    |
| Agree   | 2    | 11 | 5  | 8  | 26    | 32.5% | 7  | 12 | 6  | 1  | 7    | 1 | 34    | 31.2% | 44    |
| Strongly Agree  | 1    | 0  | 0  | 1  | 2     | 2.5%  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0    | 0 | 1     | 0.9%  | 8     |
| 29. I am satisfied with the overall quality of instruction in my school.                      |      |    |    |    |       |       |    |    |    |    |      |   |       |       |       |
| Strongly Disagree   | 1    | 0  | 0  | 1  | 2     | 2.6%  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 1  | 0    | 1 | 4     | 4.0%  | 1     |
| Disagree  | 3    | 0  | 4  | 9  | 16    | 21.1% | 3  | 3  | 3  | 2  | 10   | 0 | 23    | 21.0% | 19    |
| Agree   | 8    | 17 | 14 | 11 | 50    | 65.8% | 14 | 16 | 14 | 7  | 9    | 1 | 61    | 61.0% | 53    |
| Strongly Agree  | 1    | 3  | 4  | 0  | 8     | 10.5% | 2  | 2  | 5  | 2  | 2    | 1 | 14    | 14.0% | 9     |
| 30. The curriculum in my school is challenging to the students.                               |      |    |    |    |       |       |    |    |    |    |      |   |       |       |       |
| Strongly Disagree   | 1    | 0  | 1  | 2  | 4     | 4.9%  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 2  | 1    | 1 | 5     | 5.0%  | 3     |
| Disagree  | 4    | 1  | 3  | 6  | 14    | 17.3% | 7  | 3  | 1  | 4  | 14   | 0 | 29    | 29.0% | 8     |
| Agree   | 10   | 15 | 17 | 14 | 56    | 69.1% | 11 | 14 | 19 | 4  | 7    | 1 | 56    | 56.0% | 62    |
| Strongly Agree  | 0    | 4  | 2  | 1  | 7     | 8.6%  | 1  | 3  | 3  | 2  | 0    | 1 | 10    | 10.0% | 12    |
| 31. Parents are satisfied with the curriculum and instruction.                                |      |    |    |    |       |       |    |    |    |    |      |   |       |       |       |
| Strongly Disagree   | 7    | 3  | 5  | 6  | 21    | 27.3% | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 2    | 0 | 3     | 3.3%  | 2     |
| Disagree  | 4    | 13 | 12 | 11 | 40    | 51.9% | 5  | 3  | 2  | 2  | 9    | 0 | 21    | 23.3% | 8     |
| Agree   | 3    | 3  | 6  | 4  | 16    | 20.8% | 14 | 16 | 15 | 7  | 8    | 2 | 62    | 68.9% | 60    |
| Strongly Agree  | 0    | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0     | 0.0%  | 1  | 0  | 2  | 0  | 0    | 1 | 4     | 4.4%  | 6     |
| 32. Parents are involved in school activities.  |      |    |    |    |       |       |    |    |    |    |      |   |       |       |       |
| Strongly Disagree   | 11   | 10 | 16 | 14 | 51    | 63.0% | 9  | 10 | 12 | 7  | 9    | 2 | 49    | 48.0% | 37    |
| Disagree  | 4    | 7  | 7  | 4  | 22    | 27.2% | 8  | 10 | 11 | 5  | 10   | 1 | 45    | 44.1% | 39    |
| Agree   | 0    | 3  | 0  | 3  | 6     | 7.4%  | 3  | 2  | 0  | 0  | 2    | 0 | 7     | 6.9%  | 8     |
| Strongly Agree  | 0    | 0  | 0  | 2  | 2     | 2.5%  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0    | 0 | 1     | 1.0%  | 0     |

Exhibit A.1 - District Survey

|  | 2000 |    |    |    |   | 2004  |       |    |    |    | 2005 |    |   |       |       |
|--|------|----|----|----|---|-------|-------|----|----|----|------|----|---|-------|-------|
|  | K    | T  | J  | M  | H | Total | %     | K  | T  | J  | M    | H  | A | Total | %     |
| 33. Teachers in my school are involved in decisions that matter.                 |      |    |    |    |   |       |       |    |    |    |      |    |   |       |       |
| Strongly Disagree  | 1    | 2  | 0  | 1  |   | 14    | 17.5% | 1  | 1  | 0  | 5    | 1  | 1 | 9     | 8.7%  |
| Disagree   | 13   | 5  | 6  | 12 |   | 36    | 45.0% | 5  | 7  | 7  | 6    | 7  | 0 | 32    | 31.1% |
| Agree  | 1    | 11 | 6  | 10 |   | 28    | 35.0% | 11 | 14 | 16 | 0    | 13 | 1 | 55    | 53.4% |
| Strongly Agree   | 0    | 1  | 1  | 0  |   | 2     | 2.5%  | 3  | 1  | 0  | 1    | 1  | 1 | 7     | 6.8%  |
| 34. Multi-cultural sensitivity training will help increase academic performance. |      |    |    |    |   |       |       |    |    |    |      |    |   |       |       |
| Strongly Disagree  | 6    | 2  | 5  | 3  |   | 16    | 20.5% | 1  | 2  | 5  | 2    | 2  | 1 | 13    | 12.7% |
| Disagree   | 3    | 6  | 8  | 14 |   | 31    | 39.7% | 6  | 6  | 11 | 8    | 11 | 1 | 43    | 42.2% |
| Agree  | 5    | 9  | 7  | 5  |   | 26    | 33.3% | 10 | 14 | 5  | 1    | 5  | 1 | 36    | 35.3% |
| Strongly Agree   | 1    | 0  | 3  | 1  |   | 5     | 6.4%  | 3  | 0  | 2  | 1    | 4  | 0 | 10    | 9.8%  |
| 35. Class sizes are the right size to meet individual student's needs.           |      |    |    |    |   |       |       |    |    |    |      |    |   |       |       |
| Strongly Disagree  | 2    | 3  | 1  | 3  |   | 9     | 11.7% | 0  | 0  | 0  | 3    | 1  | 0 | 4     | 3.9%  |
| Disagree   | 8    | 7  | 7  | 9  |   | 31    | 40.3% | 5  | 0  | 2  | 5    | 5  | 0 | 17    | 16.7% |
| Agree  | 4    | 6  | 10 | 6  |   | 26    | 33.8% | 7  | 10 | 12 | 4    | 15 | 0 | 48    | 47.1% |
| Strongly Agree   | 1    | 2  | 5  | 3  |   | 11    | 14.3% | 7  | 13 | 9  | 0    | 1  | 3 | 33    | 32.4% |
| 36. The district has good administrative leadership.                             |      |    |    |    |   |       |       |    |    |    |      |    |   |       |       |
| Strongly Disagree  | 3    | 5  | 4  | 3  |   | 15    | 18.8% | 0  | 1  | 1  | 2    | 0  | 0 | 4     | 3.9%  |
| Disagree   | 9    | 8  | 7  | 9  |   | 33    | 41.3% | 2  | 6  | 6  | 4    | 0  | 0 | 18    | 17.5% |
| Agree  | 3    | 7  | 9  | 10 |   | 29    | 36.3% | 12 | 13 | 15 | 3    | 17 | 3 | 63    | 61.2% |
| Strongly Agree   | 0    | 0  | 2  | 1  |   | 3     | 3.8%  | 6  | 3  | 1  | 2    | 6  | 0 | 18    | 17.5% |
| 37. My school has good administrative leadership.                                |      |    |    |    |   |       |       |    |    |    |      |    |   |       |       |
| Strongly Disagree  | 3    | 5  | 4  | 3  |   | 20    | 26.3% | 1  | 1  | 0  | 6    | 1  | 1 | 10    | 9.8%  |
| Disagree   | 6    | 8  | 5  | 5  |   | 24    | 31.6% | 2  | 5  | 9  | 4    | 1  | 0 | 21    | 20.6% |
| Agree  | 5    | 5  | 8  | 9  |   | 27    | 35.5% | 7  | 13 | 11 | 2    | 13 | 1 | 47    | 46.1% |
| Strongly Agree   | 1    | 0  | 2  | 2  |   | 5     | 6.6%  | 9  | 4  | 3  | 0    | 7  | 1 | 24    | 23.5% |
| 38. Teachers are held accountable for student achievement in my school.          |      |    |    |    |   |       |       |    |    |    |      |    |   |       |       |
| Strongly Disagree  | 0    | 0  | 1  | 2  |   | 3     | 3.7%  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0    | 0  | 0 | 0     | 0.0%  |
| Disagree   | 3    | 4  | 5  | 4  |   | 16    | 19.8% | 8  | 5  | 5  | 3    | 3  | 0 | 24    | 23.5% |
| Agree  | 10   | 16 | 13 | 17 |   | 56    | 69.1% | 11 | 16 | 15 | 7    | 17 | 2 | 68    | 66.7% |
| Strongly Agree   | 1    | 0  | 4  | 1  |   | 6     | 7.4%  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 2    | 1  | 1 | 10    | 9.8%  |
| 39. Administrators are held accountable for student achievement in my school.    |      |    |    |    |   |       |       |    |    |    |      |    |   |       |       |
| Strongly Disagree  | 0    | 1  | 6  | 3  |   | 10    | 13.5% | 1  | 0  | 1  | 0    | 0  | 1 | 3     | 3.1%  |
| Disagree   | 6    | 7  | 9  | 11 |   | 33    | 44.6% | 5  | 5  | 8  | 10   | 3  | 1 | 32    | 33.0% |
| Agree  | 6    | 9  | 7  | 8  |   | 30    | 40.5% | 11 | 14 | 11 | 1    | 18 | 1 | 56    | 57.7% |
| Strongly Agree   | 0    | 0  | 1  | 0  |   | 1     | 1.4%  | 2  | 2  | 2  | 0    | 0  | 0 | 6     | 6.2%  |
| 40. Relations with local community   |      |    |    |    |   |       |       |    |    |    |      |    |   |       |       |
| Dissatisfied   | 3    | 2  | 4  | 4  |   | 13    | 16.3% | 2  | 3  | 2  | 0    | 0  | 0 | 7     | 7.1%  |
| Somewhat Dissatisfied  | 6    | 13 | 9  | 13 |   | 41    | 51.3% | 8  | 11 | 7  | 8    | 10 | 1 | 45    | 45.5% |
| Satisfied  | 5    | 5  | 8  | 6  |   | 24    | 30.0% | 9  | 6  | 14 | 3    | 11 | 2 | 45    | 45.5% |
| Very Satisfied   | 0    | 0  | 2  | 0  |   | 2     | 2.5%  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0    | 1  | 0 | 2     | 2.0%  |

Exhibit A.1 - District Survey

|   | 2000                  |    |    |    |    |       | 2004  |    |    |    |   |    | 2005 |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |
|---|-----------------------|----|----|----|----|-------|-------|----|----|----|---|----|------|-------|-------|----|----|----|---|----|---|-------|-------|
|   | K                     | T  | J  | H  | M  | Total | %     | K  | T  | J  | M | H  | A    | Total | %     | K  | T  | J  | M | H  | A | Total | %     |
| 41. Making academic standards obvious and clear to students |                       |    |    |    |    |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |      |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |
|   | Dissatisfied          | 1  | 3  | 2  | 3  | 9     | 11.1% | 2  | 1  | 0  | 1 | 0  | 1    | 5     | 4.9%  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1 | 1  | 0 | 2     | 2.4%  |
|   | Somewhat Dissatisfied | 6  | 5  | 7  | 13 | 31    | 38.3% | 5  | 5  | 3  | 4 | 4  | 0    | 21    | 20.4% | 4  | 0  | 4  | 1 | 4  | 0 | 13    | 15.5% |
|   | Satisfied             | 8  | 11 | 14 | 7  | 40    | 49.4% | 11 | 12 | 19 | 7 | 18 | 2    | 69    | 67.0% | 20 | 11 | 9  | 4 | 13 | 4 | 61    | 72.6% |
| Very Satisfied  | 0                     | 1  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1     | 1.2%  | 2  | 5  | 1  | 0 | 0  | 0    | 8     | 7.8%  | 1  | 5  | 0  | 1 | 1  | 0 | 8     | 9.5%  |
| 42. Making academic standards obvious and clear to teachers |                       |    |    |    |    |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |      |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |
|   | Dissatisfied          | 0  | 1  | 2  | 1  | 4     | 4.9%  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 2 | 1  | 1    | 4     | 3.9%  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0 | 0  | 0 | 1     | 1.2%  |
|   | Somewhat Dissatisfied | 4  | 5  | 3  | 7  | 19    | 23.5% | 4  | 4  | 3  | 2 | 2  | 0    | 15    | 14.6% | 2  | 1  | 4  | 0 | 1  | 0 | 8     | 9.5%  |
|   | Satisfied             | 10 | 13 | 15 | 14 | 52    | 64.2% | 12 | 13 | 18 | 8 | 19 | 1    | 71    | 68.9% | 22 | 11 | 9  | 6 | 16 | 3 | 67    | 79.8% |
| Very Satisfied  | 1                     | 1  | 3  | 1  | 6  | 7.4%  | 3     | 6  | 2  | 0  | 1 | 1  | 13   | 12.6% | 1     | 3  | 0  | 1  | 2 | 1  | 8 | 9.5%  |       |
| 43. Clear student performance expectations                  |                       |    |    |    |    |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |      |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |
|   | Dissatisfied          | 2  | 2  | 2  | 4  | 10    | 12.5% | 2  | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0  | 1    | 3     | 2.9%  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0 | 0  | 0 | 1     | 1.2%  |
|   | Somewhat Dissatisfied | 3  | 2  | 3  | 10 | 18    | 22.5% | 1  | 6  | 3  | 4 | 9  | 0    | 23    | 22.5% | 4  | 1  | 1  | 2 | 7  | 1 | 16    | 18.6% |
|   | Satisfied             | 10 | 14 | 16 | 9  | 49    | 61.3% | 15 | 11 | 18 | 8 | 13 | 2    | 67    | 65.7% | 18 | 13 | 10 | 5 | 12 | 3 | 61    | 70.9% |
| Very Satisfied  | 0                     | 1  | 2  | 0  | 3  | 3.8%  | 2     | 5  | 2  | 0  | 0 | 0  | 9    | 8.8%  | 3     | 1  | 2  | 0  | 2 | 0  | 8 | 9.3%  |       |
| 44. Resources available for instruction                     |                       |    |    |    |    |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |      |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |
|   | Dissatisfied          | 5  | 3  | 9  | 12 | 29    | 36.3% | 1  | 1  | 3  | 3 | 0  | 0    | 8     | 7.8%  | 4  | 1  | 1  | 2 | 3  | 0 | 11    | 13.1% |
|   | Somewhat Dissatisfied | 6  | 10 | 7  | 6  | 29    | 36.3% | 9  | 5  | 6  | 1 | 10 | 1    | 32    | 31.1% | 6  | 2  | 6  | 3 | 5  | 4 | 26    | 31.0% |
|   | Satisfied             | 4  | 6  | 5  | 5  | 20    | 25.0% | 10 | 13 | 13 | 7 | 10 | 2    | 55    | 53.4% | 15 | 10 | 5  | 2 | 10 | 0 | 42    | 50.0% |
| Very Satisfied  | 0                     | 0  | 2  | 0  | 2  | 2.5%  | 0     | 4  | 1  | 1  | 2 | 0  | 8    | 7.8%  | 0     | 3  | 1  | 1  | 0 | 0  | 5 | 6.0%  |       |
| 45. School buildings and facilities                         |                       |    |    |    |    |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |      |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |
|   | Dissatisfied          | 4  | 4  | 17 | 13 | 38    | 46.9% | 3  | 6  | 10 | 6 | 4  | 1    | 30    | 29.1% | 1  | 6  | 3  | 2 | 6  | 2 | 20    | 23.5% |
|   | Somewhat Dissatisfied | 6  | 13 | 5  | 9  | 33    | 40.7% | 3  | 13 | 8  | 4 | 6  | 0    | 34    | 33.0% | 7  | 4  | 7  | 3 | 6  | 2 | 29    | 34.1% |
|   | Satisfied             | 5  | 3  | 1  | 1  | 10    | 12.3% | 12 | 4  | 4  | 2 | 11 | 2    | 35    | 34.0% | 17 | 5  | 3  | 2 | 8  | 0 | 35    | 41.2% |
| Very Satisfied  | 0                     | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0.0%  | 2     | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1 | 0  | 4    | 3.9%  | 0     | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0  | 1 | 1.2%  |       |
| 46. Availability of classroom supplies                      |                       |    |    |    |    |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |      |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |
|   | Dissatisfied          | 4  | 0  | 10 | 17 | 31    | 38.3% | 3  | 0  | 2  | 3 | 2  | 0    | 10    | 9.7%  | 4  | 0  | 3  | 4 | 3  | 1 | 15    | 17.9% |
|   | Somewhat Dissatisfied | 6  | 2  | 10 | 3  | 21    | 25.9% | 4  | 3  | 10 | 6 | 6  | 0    | 29    | 28.2% | 7  | 4  | 6  | 2 | 1  | 1 | 31    | 36.9% |
|   | Satisfied             | 5  | 17 | 2  | 3  | 27    | 33.3% | 11 | 17 | 11 | 3 | 11 | 3    | 56    | 54.4% | 12 | 9  | 4  | 1 | 5  | 2 | 33    | 39.3% |
| Very Satisfied  | 0                     | 1  | 1  | 0  | 2  | 2.5%  | 2     | 3  | 0  | 0  | 3 | 0  | 8    | 7.8%  | 2     | 3  | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0  | 5 | 6.0%  |       |
| 47. Availability of computers and other technology          |                       |    |    |    |    |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |      |       |       |    |    |    |   |    |   |       |       |
|   | Dissatisfied          | 13 | 11 | 12 | 15 | 51    | 63.8% | 11 | 9  | 11 | 2 | 2  | 2    | 37    | 36.3% | 4  | 6  | 4  | 3 | 4  | 0 | 21    | 25.0% |
|   | Somewhat Dissatisfied | 1  | 7  | 10 | 6  | 24    | 30.0% | 8  | 6  | 8  | 4 | 4  | 1    | 31    | 30.4% | 7  | 7  | 3  | 1 | 2  | 3 | 23    | 27.4% |
|   | Satisfied             | 1  | 1  | 1  | 2  | 5     | 6.3%  | 1  | 7  | 4  | 5 | 12 | 0    | 29    | 28.4% | 12 | 2  | 6  | 3 | 9  | 1 | 33    | 39.3% |
| Very Satisfied  | 0                     | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0.0%  | 0     | 0  | 0  | 1  | 4 | 0  | 5    | 4.9%  | 2     | 1  | 0  | 0  | 4 | 0  | 7 | 8.3%  |       |

**█████ Elementary**  
**Teacher Survey 2003-04**  
**Survey Results**

|   | Improved this year | Same as other years | Less this year |
|---|--------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| I was an important part of <del>█████</del> School this year.                           | 21                 | 4                   | 0              |
| I felt comfortable talking things over with my principal.                               | 24                 | 1                   | 0              |
| Education was the primary focus this year.  | 19                 | 6                   | 0              |
| I had a variety of activities to participate in student and staff activities this year. | 23                 | 2                   | 0              |
| Problems were handled in the office in a timely and fair manner.                        | 19                 | 6                   | 0              |

**Things I think went well this year:**

I enjoyed my first year! I value Mrs. Amato's open door policy. I feel the staff and administration were all willing to help me as a new teacher in the

district. ~~Mr. Smith~~ had a lot of good ideas. He spent a lot of time in my room and I didn't even know he was in my room.

Selection of new reading program.

School climate is improved.

Felt freer to diversify instruction and methods, both for reading and tutoring.

Changes are good. Everything that changed had a smooth transition.

- Decision points
- Activities
- Schedules
- Hall passes
- New Administrator!!

I believe that all of the teachers were able to feel important and special. Any concerns that we had were handled professionally and fairly. The students enjoyed coming to school and felt as if they belonged. There were also a lot of new programs and activities that started this year. Thanks for a great year!! I will never forget this year. You have done a wonderful job and I love coming to work! You have been an asset to this school and very supportive! Thanks!!

Great work with the principal and teachers working together!!  
Supportive administrator!!

More positive atmosphere in the building.

More freedom - room for a variety of teaching styles in the classroom.

Less stress.

I feel that the students really had a lot of involvement and felt like a big part of the school. They showed pride and loyalty to the school.

Problems were dealt with quickly.

Mostly, it felt like a school "family".

Behavior management went well this year.

~~Mr. Smith~~, ~~Mr. Smith~~, Mrs. Amato kept students calm and resolved conflicts quickly.



Students felt comfortable confiding in staff members because we create a "family" environment for them at [REDACTED].

We had a very comfortable atmosphere. There were many opportunities for staff and students to be involved. Thanks for everything!! You did a great job this year!!

I liked the fact that there were many positive rewards for kids who do well with both behavior and academics.

Mostly everything!!

I really like the "open door" policy. I feel it is important for the staff to see how open you are. I felt as if any time I could come in with an issue, concern or problem. It was nice to see a constant smiling face!!

It was such a pleasure coming to work this year. You made it so easy for us. You listened and were open to any ideas we had and wanted to try. You were always positive. I couldn't have asked for a better place to work.

- 1) Changing of classes for reading—transition.
- 2) Student Council Activities were excellent.
- 3) Jean Day on Fridays for staff.
- 4) Movie Night—Fall Cleanup—[REDACTED] Stars
- 5) Your personal involvement with staff/student activities on and off the [REDACTED] campus.
- 6) Friendly emails to us and personal replies to emails.

Special Education kids were recognized quickly.

A lot of freedom to be creative in teaching.

Climate in building was conducive to positive thinking.

Principal/Staff relations.

I sincerely appreciated the support and acceptance.

Everything improved this year, especially the teacher morale, teacher-principal relationship. The general atmosphere was more relaxing and pressure less. Students were involved in more fun learning activities and I

saw more parental involvement. For me, it was a great school year. Thank you for your help, support and encouragement.

Establishing, developing, nurturing staff morale.

Beginnings of establishing a more kid centered school.

Creating a happier workplace.

Addressing not only short term behavioral and psychological issues and crisis but long term issues such as APS, referrals to counseling, etc.

Addition of LPN on my out of building days! This was so helpful!!

Morale of the building.

Having a say in the educational issues in the classroom.

Overall the year was a good year.

I think this year went very well for me, my class and the school as a whole. New ideas and projects helped the children feel better about themselves and to learn.

I look forward to next year.

More positive climate/environment.

Approachable principal.

- Student Council
- Overall positive atmosphere created by principal!! I love coming to work!!
- Program with Dr. ~~Shannon~~
- Communication—I like how I was always aware of my students consequences from the office.
- Improved parental involvement

Thanks for all your support!!

**Things I'd like us to improve for next year:**

Lunch detention- perhaps one primary and one intermediate.  
Emotional Support program with social skills activities.

Referral/In-School procedures—more prior notice.  
When kids are sent out—not brought right back up to room.

Kindergarten could be included more in the behavioral system.

More discipline/order in the building.

Timely behavior issues. Many times behaviors were not taken care of until the next day. Young kids forget and when behaviors aren't dealt with within 1-2 hours the consequence is not effective.

A time out for special education kids with Emotional Support who need time out but not necessarily In School.

A major consequence for defiant kids. Having a child demean a teacher is worse than them fighting. Once a child gets away with talking back to a teacher it opens the door for more behaviors, even worse ones.

I would like to see group screening (for height, weight, vision and hearing) done by building as a team with all the nurses to cut down on the year long process and/or the ability to use the LPN or another person to help screen.

More kid centered staff.

Opportunity to address: groups, average and above students, developmental issues.

Establish a strong functional streamlined behavioral system.

More improvement in the student discipline in the lunchroom.

Early intervention with behavior problem students.

More educational assemblies and involve kindergarten more.

Strict supervision during bathroom times.

Uniforms- inform parents now if there are going to be uniforms next year.

Would like to see an improvement in student behavior and accountability.  
Consistency in dealing with behavior problems with everyone "on the same page".

Notification of students being suspended, in school, if work is needed.

Additional playground equipment.

Noise level on ramps (Art class after 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup> periods).

I would like to see less referrals to the office from staff. I would like to see an improvement during the lunch period. Lunch was much, much better that last year and I know it will be awesome next year because we have so many teachers now interested in working.

I know we are going to work on dress code which I feel would be a big plus in improvement. I also feel we will work more on behavioral concerns.

Areas involving discipline.

Bridge the gap between veteran teacher and new staff.

Gifted scheduling and classes.

Gifted programs.

More people on the same page with positive discipline but that is already happening with the core team and ~~the rest of the staff~~

I was never formally observed. I want to hear what went well and where I can grow.

Consistency in discipline.

Policies for students and staff—knowledge of kids going to in school or out of school if work is needed.

Lunch duties.

I hope next year goes just as well as this year. The only thing I would like to see is more teacher involvement in extra activities.

Teacher/student relationships and teacher/teacher relationships. I believe if everyone had the same common goal then we would be better able to develop better relationships. That common goal, I believe, should be the academic and personal growth of every child that comes in contact with us.

Noise level in halls during the change of classes.

I did not have an observation and I am sure that is because of everything you have to do in the school although I like feedback to see what is working well and what I can improve because I really respect your professional opinion.

I am pleased with the changes that are being made. I would like to see lunch and recess running more smoothly. I think with the new games for recess it will go a lot better. I plan on doing lunch duty at the beginning of the year next school year now that I know how the school works.

I feel we need to have a plan on what to do when you are out of the building. I tried to call [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and no one was in their office. I had to continue calling until I reached someone. I don't think that was very safe.

Number of teachers who returned surveys: 25

**█████ Elementary**  
**Student Survey 2003-04**  
**Survey Results**

|  | Improved this year | Same as other years | Less this year |
|--|--------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| I was an important part of █████ School this year.                                 | 30                 | 15                  | 7              |
| I felt comfortable talking things over with my principal.                          | 32                 | 14                  | 6              |
| Education was the primary focus this year.   | 38                 | 13                  | 1              |
| I had a variety of activities to participate in during and after school this year. | 40                 | 8                   | 4              |
| Problems were handled in the office in a timely and fair manner.                   | 28                 | 17                  | 7              |

**Things I really liked this year:**

Roller skating

The teachers at █████

Going to Geauga Lake

Field trips

Dances

Dances

My principal

Six Flags

Cheerleading

Art

Overnight camping

The activities she gave us

Kennywood

Student Council

Plays

Exhibit A.3 - Building Survey (Student)

|                         |                    |                        |
|-------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Everything              | Dances             | Field trips            |
| Dances                  | Reading            | Homeroom and recess    |
| Six Flags               | My classes         | Making new friends     |
| Basketball              | Field trips        | Music                  |
| All the dances we had   | Gym                | Movie nights           |
| Student Council         | Student Council    | Raffles                |
| Field trips             | Dances             | Overnight scouting     |
| Dances                  | Trips              | Graduation             |
| Camp                    | Fun fair           | Dances                 |
| Geauga Lake             | Popsicle sales     | Safety Patrol          |
| Everything              | Cheerleading       | Student council        |
| Safety Patrol           | Dances             | Field trips            |
| Activities              | Education          | Games                  |
| Overnight camping       | Six Flags          | Dances                 |
| Student Council         | Promotion          | Basketball             |
| Six Flags               | Roller Skating     | Field trips            |
| Lunch                   | Everything         | Reading                |
| Math                    | Privileges         | Activities             |
| Graduation              | Student Council    | Mrs. <del>XXXXXX</del> |
| Six Flags               | Promotion          | Dances                 |
| Getting a 4 on the PSSA | Popsicle sale      | Making good grades     |
| Gym                     | Field trips        | Fund raising           |
| Field trips             | Six Flags          | Secret pals            |
| Six Flags               | Dances             | Skating                |
| The Cookout             | All activities     | Secret Pal Party       |
| Six Flags               | Field trips        | Projects in art        |
| Problems were handled   | Dances             | Girls Night Out        |
| Dances                  | Yearbooks          | Movie Night            |
| Dances                  | Parties            | Overnight Scouting     |
| Candy Sales             | Overnight camp     | Raffles                |
| Promotion               | In-school Scouting | Cleanup Days           |
| Drums in Music          | Field trips        | Dances                 |
| Parties                 | Field trips        | Skating trip           |
| Dances                  | Dances             | Fun things             |
| Overnight camp          | Sold popsicles     | Fall Cleanup           |
| Mrs. Amato              | Dances             | Field trips            |
| Dances                  | Dances             | Ms. <del>XXXXXX</del>  |
|                         | Fall cleanup       | Popsicle Sale          |

Exhibit A.3 - Building Survey (Student)

|                             |                 |              |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Frick                       | Field trips     | Dances       |
| Movie nights                | Field trips     | Dances       |
| Dances                      | PSSAs           | Field trips  |
| Random Acts of Kindness     | Secret Pals     | Cleanups     |
| Dances                      | Dances          | My class     |
| Dances                      | Field trips     | Nursing home |
| Frick Park                  | Field trips     | Dances       |
| All we did                  | Dances          | Dances       |
| Field trips                 | Dances          | Dances       |
| Secret Pals                 | Student Council | Field trips  |
| Dances                      | Field trips     | Teachers     |
| Student Council             | Friends         | Field trips  |
| Student Council             | Fall Cleanup    | Parties      |
| Just being at school        | Field trips     | Dances       |
| Field trips                 | Dances          | Secret Pals  |
| Nursing home                | Yearbooks       | Secret Pals  |
| Student Council             | Cleanup         | Frick Park   |
| Student doing announcements | Dances          | Mrs. Amato   |
| Ms. [REDACTED]              |                 |              |

Things I Didn't Like:

Not going on the overnight trip.  
 We didn't get to go on the trip.  
 I don't like to be hollered at.  
 I didn't like inside recess and lunch detention.  
 Movie night.  
 People who don't have manners.  
 I liked everything.  
 How [REDACTED] kept messing with me.  
 People who don't use nice words.  
 If I couldn't go on a trip.  
 In School Suspension.  
 That we didn't go on a field trip.  
 You can't wear big chains or bring your basketball.  
 Nothing.  
 When I couldn't go.  
 Everything but the broken window.



I didn't like how ~~Ms. [redacted]~~ and ~~Mr. [redacted]~~ left us.

How people act sometimes.

When we had to stay in for recess.

I did not like the food.

The food.

Discipline.

The carnival.

Nothing.

When we get ready to go on a field trip and somebody steals something of

Ms. ~~[redacted]~~

We weren't allowed to bring basketballs.

Gym.

When the class be bad and we can't do anything.

Bullies.

Fights. Favoritism.

Friends breaking up.

Nothing really.

Some of the teachers because they would threaten to keep me from graduation then they'd be nice to me.

The way recess is.

Lunch time.

I didn't like the arguing and fighting when a substitute was there.

Scoring low grades.

Decision points.

Not enough activities in gym.

Heinz History Field Trip.

The zoo.

Fighting.

The sixth grade test.

I liked everything.

Nothing.

Art tests.

Getting yelled at.

Haters.

Nothing.

I didn't dislike anything.

Movie night because they showed old movies.

I don't like how people pick fights.

Being suspended.

There is nothing I didn't like this year.

All of it - because I didn't participate.

Decision points.

Nothing.

The carnival.

**Number of students who returned surveys: 53**

**█████ Elementary**  
**Parent Survey 2003-04**  
**Survey Results**

|   | Improved this year | Same as other years | Less this year |
|---|--------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| I felt comfortable visiting █████ School this year.                                       | 12                 | 4                   | 1              |
| I felt comfortable calling the principal's office.  | 7                  | 10                  | 0              |
| Education was the primary focus this year.  | 12                 | 3                   | 2              |
| My child had a variety of activities to participate in during and after school this year. | 10                 | 4                   | 3              |
| Issues were handled in the office in a timely and fair manner.                            | 13                 | 3                   | 1              |

**Any comments and/or suggestions:**

Continue to make yourself available to parents. I believe the "Girls Night Out" was great. Keep it up!! I would say try to make all the teachers more available to parents.

Mrs. Amato, you are a wonderful addition to ~~XXXX~~ School. I appreciate everything you have done for my child. Thank you!!

I feel a parent should be able to visit at anytime they wish. I was told I had to have advance notice to do that. Because of that I had less visits than the school we went to last year.

I liked Promise making good grades but he was marked absent when he was here.

I liked the activities like field trips and movie nights.

The principal was one- on- one, hands- on, inside and out with student problems and concerns.

In the beginning of the school year there were many changes, new teachers and a new principal. I did not think things would turn out as well as they did. The principal participated in many activities outside of school, during evenings, and on weekends. The teachers and staff really had an impact on my daughter's last year at ~~XXXX~~ Elementary.

Number of parents who returned surveys: 17

## 2.0 APPENDIX B – BUILDING DOCUMENTS

This section holds documents that provide descriptive details for the narrative account of the changed context at Jefferson School. Various sources are represented from emails, to newspaper articles to handwritten notes from teachers. Each gives a glimpse into the who, what, when and where of the change process and contributes to the telling of the story of change in **CHAPTER 5**. A complete listing of the exhibits, their descriptions, sources and dates can be found on pages 125-28.

Exhibit B.1 - Teacher Correspondence

November 8, 2004

Dear Secret Pals,

Thank you for your assistance. We will have two halves. We tied for luncheon and going out at the end, so we will do both. The following dates are for the first half:

1<sup>st</sup> gift due Nov. 19, 2004

2<sup>nd</sup> gift due Dec. 3, 2004

3<sup>rd</sup> gift due Dec. 17, 2004

4<sup>th</sup> gift due Jan. 14, 2005

5<sup>th</sup> gift due Jan. 28, 2005

6<sup>th</sup> gift due Feb. 11, 2005

On Feb. 25, 2005 in the morning, we will have coffee, juice , and donuts to reveal secret pals for the first half. Bring a final gift at that time and a 'thank you' for the person that gave you gifts. Always remember to give the gift you would like to receive. Have fun and by all means keep it a secret. I am available to deliver gifts. The second half dates will be available at the end of the day on Feb.25, 2005. Please let me know of any problems or concerns.

A blacked-out signature, likely of the sender, located at the bottom left of the letter.

Amato, Eileen

---

From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: Friday, October 03, 2003 8:34 AM  
To: Amato, Eileen  
Subject: Picnic

I will be happy to help serve food for the picnic on Wednesday after school. Also, a parent stopped me this morning and said that he's very impressed with the positive changes that he notices at [REDACTED] School this year!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Just thought I'd pass it along! He said that he's looking forward to meeting you on Wednesday!!!!!!!!!!!! [REDACTED]

## PLEASE HELP IF YOU CAN

AS YOU MAY OR MAY NOT BE AWARE...~~MISS~~  
~~MISS~~ LOST A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF  
HOUSEHOLD ITEMS IN THE SEPTEMBER FLOOD.

IN PARTICULAR SHE LOST ALL OF HER  
CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS. WITH THE HOLIDAY  
SEASON APPROACHING WE THOUGHT TO TRY  
AND MAKE AMIE AND HER FAMILY'S HOLIDAY A  
LITTLE BRIGHTER BY DONATING NEW  
CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS. (ORNAMENTS,  
LIGHTS, WREATHS, OR ANYTHING YOU THINK  
WOULD BE NICE FOR HER HOME)

PLEASE BRING YOUR ITEM/DONATION TO ROOM  
40(Pre-K) BY NOVEMBER 30<sup>TH</sup>.

THANK YOU IN ADVANCE,  
~~MISS~~



Amato, Eileen

---

From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: Tuesday, September 30, 2003 5:49 PM  
To: Amato, Eileen  
Subject: Thanks

Mrs. Amato,

I just wanted to say thanks for the nice e-mail you sent our staff. It is nice to know that everything seems to be running smoother. I also appreciate the fact that you notice the positive attitudes here at [REDACTED]. I know that you are responsible for a lot of the smiles and laughs. Thanks for everything you have done so far this year. You have made a huge difference and you have created a great atmosphere. You have been very supportive.

The conference that Rachel and I went to today went well. I e-mailed [REDACTED] to tell her about it and we are going to try to get together next week to discuss what went on. We will let you know and if you want to join us you can.

[REDACTED]

Amato, Eileen

---

From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: Tuesday, March 07, 2006 4:19 PM  
To: Amato, Eileen; [REDACTED], [REDACTED]  
Cc: [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED]  
Subject: PSSA Family Night

Mrs. Amato and [REDACTED],

The 5th grade team of teachers met toda and planned our annual "PSSA Family Night". After reviewing all of our schedules and the school calendar, we decided to have it on Monday, March 13th. It will be from 3:00-4:00, since there is no tutoring on Mondays.

We all divided up the responsibilities. [REDACTED] is typing up our itinerary, and she is presenting "4-Sight." [REDACTED] is responsible for typing up a letter for the parents, and she is repsonsible for presenting "Reading". [REDACTED] ordered the folders, and she is presenting the "Math" portion of our meeting. I am presenting the Introduction and the Closing portion of our meeting. I am also going to order and pick up the food and request the table and chairs to be set up from [REDACTED]. We are going to invite all of the math and reading coaches too! We are going to see if [REDACTED] can provide us with some math prizes for a raffle.

We have everything pretty much covered, we just wanted to invite you to our "Family Night". Is there anything else you can think of? We were going to order 2 sandwich rings and 1 veggie tray. We were also going to get cookies and punch. Is this okay?

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ School District

# Student Data Summary

Teacher: ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

Building: ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

Subject: Rdg.

2004-05

Terra Nova / Harcourt Placement / Gates / Theme 4 Pre test / Story Test / Hit Field Summer

| Student Name          | Source #1 | Source #2 | Source #3 | Source #4 | Source #5 | Level        |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------|
| <del>XXXXXXXXXX</del> | NA        | NA        | NA        | 41%       | 60%       | B+ - EAP/21  |
| <del>XXXXXXXXXX</del> | 2.7       | on 42     | 51        | 36%       | 80%       | B+ - EAP/21  |
| <del>XXXXXXXXXX</del> | 3.7       | Below 37  | 64        |           | 85%       | P 21         |
| <del>XXXXXXXXXX</del> | 3.6       | Below 26  | 30        |           | 40%       | BB+ - EAP/21 |
| <del>XXXXXXXXXX</del> | 8.5       | above 42  | 77        | 64%       | 71%       | P+ - 21      |
| <del>XXXXXXXXXX</del> | 6.4       | above 40  | 65        | 68%       | 76%       | P - 21       |
| <del>XXXXXXXXXX</del> | 3.5       | Below 29  | 48        | 50%       | 30%       | B - EAP/21   |
| <del>XXXXXXXXXX</del> | 3.7       | on 38     | 47        | 45%       | 70%       | P - EAP/21   |
| <del>XXXXXXXXXX</del> | 8.7       | on 43     | 72        | 55%       | 70%       | P - EAP/21   |
| <del>XXXXXXXXXX</del> | 3.0       | Below 40  | 31        |           |           | BB - EAP/21  |

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ATTENDANCE

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P-21

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SERIOUS-IMP)  
21

BB-EAP/21

Grade Level Meetings  
█████ Elementary  
November 30, 2004

Issues for Discussion Within your Grade Level

Literacy

1. Discuss successes, frustrations, and impressions of reading program to date. What are lessons and skills that students have responded to easily? What are lessons and skills that will need revisited?
2. Identify students who may need to move to other reading groups. Discuss the why and when.
3. Share successes with flex grouping. How often have you tried? Which skills needed another visit with some students? How did the students who were not in the flex group respond? What were they doing?
4. Discuss assessments. How are you administering? Are you sectioning? Are you giving as a whole assessment?
5. Are there particular assessments you feel each grade level should do that would be mandatory? Which ones? Why? How should we record? Should we keep a copy?
6. Discuss your grading. Do you feel grades communicate reading ability to parents and others? Which assessments would you want the students you will be getting next year to be recorded for you to use? How should we average and determine the nine weeks and final grade?
7. Are students getting an extra boost with the tutoring? Is there anything we can do to get the most out of the extra help?

Math

1. Discuss successes, frustrations and impressions of math program to date. What are lessons and skills that students are mastering? What are lessons and skills that need revisited?
2. How are students doing with their problem solving tasks? Share lessons that went well and those that you struggled with.
3. Discuss how you are working gaming and basic fact practice into your lessons. How are students doing with their basic

facts? Are you communicating their needs to their after school tutor?

4. How are you grading? What assessments would you like to be available for you to see next year?

#### Items for Discussion Across the Grade Level

1. What were skills that students came to you knowing well this year?
2. What were skills that students didn't know so well?
3. What information did you have about students that proved to be useful?
4. What information would you have liked to have had?
5. Summarize and share how your grade level responded to the reading and literacy discussion items at your grade level today.
6. Summarize and share how your grade level responded to assessment and grading.

#### Parent Involvement

1. Discuss ways that you have involved parents this year.
2. What are additional ways we may try? If you have not planned you literacy night yet, discuss your program and use some time to firm up your ideas.

B.7 - Grade Level Meeting Summary  
GRADE 2 LEVEL MEETING

Attending:

1. [scribbled out]
2. [scribbled out]
3. [scribbled out]
4. [scribbled out]
5. [scribbled out]
6. [scribbled out]

Minutes:

1. Theme tests - not a valid test - Not enough question for each skill

The book does not provide enough practice for the skill of the week.

3. Flex grouping works with some students. Small class sizes work well for this.

4. Assessments are an individual decision.

5. End of story tests are mandatory.  
End of theme tests are given but not part of reading the grade See answer to question #1.

6. Rdg Grades - % or letter grade  
- ~~Break down vocabulary + Comprehension~~

The checklist is difficult ~~for parents to understand~~  
~~w/o teacher explanation.~~

7. Too many kids in tutoring. We need smaller groups.  
(Rdg + Math)

Math

1. They still need their basic facts.
2. Problem solving tasks are a work in progress.
3. Games when time permits and when they show up in the lesson.
4. Tests and quizzes get graded in math.

Attending:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Minutes:

1. Ready Night Date April 7 (first week) Thurs

(A) strategies

- Word building w/ prefixes and suffixes
- Literacy books ( )
- Story map

\*Time restraints

In a whole days math lesson

(2) Math games - how are we getting to them?

- Time telling time

factors/multiples of 2

vocabulary

Flip-Rotations  
symmetry congruent

3 2 1  
3 1 2 2

ordered pairs

\*Problem Solving  
- grading / reviewing  
- rubrics w/ kids

Eligible content

Importance of time

Between time starting

Afternoon instruction

\* 12:15 - 12:30

Science -  
Language -  
Social Studies -

Time Restraints

- In-School Seating  
- Ciss Program

Reading Kids - Testing review

- vocabulary  
- home / school

Math games 12:00 - 12:30  
Try it daily

Core

next functional \* Writing a response  
Demonstrations  
Research - analysis  
presentations

\* Reading writings and lead



Reading - Letter grade  
Assessments: • Story tests.

- Post test Theme
- Vocab quizzes - in a sentence
- Research writing -
- Writing Prompt

(Rd)

Mandatory

- Holistic
- 3/yr
- Theme tests
- Oral reading fluency

(math)

Beginning  
Middle of yr  
End of assessment

Math  
Assessments: • Write test

- Quizzes
- Some homework

Attending:

1. [scribbled]
2. [scribbled]
3. [scribbled]
4. [scribbled]
5. [scribbled]
6. [scribbled]

Minutes:

### Reading Frustrations

- size of reading groups
- having ES & LS in same group
- skills too difficult for grade level
- stories are not interesting (5<sup>th</sup>)
- non-special ed student in our groups

- ★ Students are not being tutored at their reading level, especially the special education students.
- There are too many students in tutoring groups.

### Flexible grouping

- some successes, some frustrations
- not enough time

Students who may need moved to new reading ~~group~~ group:

Ronald Williams 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> (Marisa to Jackie) When?

Martel Mitchell Sp.ed to regular (Scholze to Low 4<sup>th</sup> grade) When?

- He is not special ed

Parent Participation - needs improvement



# Math

## B.7 - Grade Level Meeting Summary

- We mainly use Everyday Math as a guided for the topic. We create our own materials and lessons.
- We also create our own assessments
- Special Education teachers would like to be regularly included in the math tasks and problem solving activities with the math ~~tasks~~ coaches.
- 6<sup>th</sup> grade is included for math
  - Students lack basic skills.

\* From a special ed. point of view, we need more training on giving assessments and using them to write more effective objectives at the beginning or end of each year. Therefore, our special ed. IEPs will be more useful.

\* We need more meetings for specifically ~~for~~ special education teachers, where we can discuss special ed. concerns. We are thinking possibly once every two weeks, then once a month. We would also like a representative from administration to address any concerns.

## Attending:

1. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~
2. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~
3. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~
4. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~
5. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~
6. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

## Minutes:

Literacy: The 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers discussed successes, frustrations and impressions of reading program to date. We feel that students are improving in sticking to what our expectations are for them for this reading program. Most of the strategies that good readers use have been easy for our students to grasp. Some are creating mental images, adjusting reading rate, and summarizing and paraphrasing. We feel that we will probably need to revisit the Figurative Language or Literary Devices.

We may have some students that need to be evaluated in the near future. We have not tried flex grouping in all of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes. We will need to work on some management techniques to help with this new style of grouping. We are administering the End of Selection Tests and Oral Reading Fluency tests. We will be administering a Placement Test (Pre and Post) upon students return from break. We will administer this in our homerooms. We also give Spelling and Language tests each week. We do record our assessments and keep a copy. We think that Placement tests, end of selection tests, Language and Spelling Tests, and Writing tests are all important and should be mandatory. We do feel that the grading system with this program gives a true

→

picture to the parents about today's meeting. We think it would be helpful to see assessment data from the previous year. Even a combination of assessments in the form of a journal would be helpful. We feel that students are definitely getting an extra boost with the tutoring. It has been helpful to be able to keep our own students for tutoring.

Math - Our frustrations are compounded by incompatibility of student skills with skills needed for Connected Math. How do we Bridge the Gap?

Students are beginning to master basic skills. We may need to revisit the fraction concepts. Parts of a whole, symbolic representation, benchmarks, comparing fractions and equivalent fractions, fractions greater than one, number lines, and labeling. These concepts will be revisited in tutoring and in the regular school day until they have some mastery. We administer the Checkups, and Unit tests. We would like to see Every Day Math End of the Year assessments.

Literature Night - Tentatively set for January 26, 2005. 5:00 - 6:00 pm. We need to talk to Mr. Habley to see if this is good for him. Would the Computer Lab be open for us to do a Research activity?



Grade Level Meetings

Nov. 3, 2004

~~Nov~~ Elementary

I. EAP tutoring 1 hr. 15 min planning. Contractual rate. Mon-Thurs.  
No more than 10 in a group. All 4 days or partner-2 rdg  
2 math. Paperwork. Pass out student letters. Tchrs.  
need to decide by Fri.

II. Dibels==flex grouping - Discuss how each grade is using.  
For what? When? Give ex. of some I've seen.

III. Observations Focus- review balanced literacy prog.  
Want to see instruction- Students reading.

IV. Reading coaches/new groups - Groups based on skills they  
need to learn- if someone not serviced see us for  
tutoring or possibly child st.

V. Class split lists Turn in ASAP. Will only use if necessary

VI. Assessments - Use asses. to drive/modify instruct.  
Decide by grade level which assessments  
you will use as a team so parents have same  
info in bldg.

## 4Sight Summary Results--Grades with "Cut" Scores

|   | Math                  |       |       |         | Reading               |       |       |         |
|---|-----------------------|-------|-------|---------|-----------------------|-------|-------|---------|
|   | % Proficient/Advanced |       |       |         | % Proficient/Advanced |       |       |         |
|   | Sept                  | Nov   | Jan   | Mar/Apr | Sept                  | Nov   | Jan   | Mar/Apr |
| <del>Grade 3</del>  | 28.1%                 | 41.9% | 56.3% | 57.6%   | 15.6%                 | 33.3% | 21.9% | 46.9%   |
| <del>Grade 5</del>  | 3.2%                  | 3.1%  | 15.6% | 43.8%   | 3.2%                  | 9.4%  | 15.6% | 34.4%   |
| <del>Grade 3</del>  | 29.4%                 | 39.4% | 34.4% | 56.3%   | 14.7%                 | 23.5% | 34.4% | 50.0%   |
| <del>Grade 5</del>  | 8.0%                  | 13.2% | 52.1% | 68.8%   | 6.0%                  | 17.0% | 38.8% | 53.1%   |
| <del>Grade 3</del>  | 20.5%                 | 36.1% | 47.2% | 52.9%   | 5.1%                  | 5.7%  | 16.7% | 29.4%   |
| <del>Grade 5</del>  | 0.0%                  | 7.9%  | 10.3% | 17.6%   | 0.0%                  | 23.7% | 23.3% | 31.4%   |
| <del>Grade 3-8</del>  | 19.7%                 | 26.0% | 32.4% | 36.1%   | 18.3%                 | 29.4% | 37.6% | 29.9%   |
| AYP Proficiency Requirement--2005/2006<br>Reading--54%<br>Math--45% |                       |       |       |         |                       |       |       |         |

## 4Sight Summary Results--Grades without "Cut" Scores (Quartiles Only)

|                      | Math                               |       |       |         | Reading                            |       |       |         |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|-------|-------|---------|------------------------------------|-------|-------|---------|
|                      | Top Two Quartiles--NOT PROFICIENCY |       |       |         | Top Two Quartiles--NOT PROFICIENCY |       |       |         |
|                      | Sept                               | Nov   | Jan   | Mar/Apr | Sept                               | Nov   | Jan   | Mar/Apr |
| <del>Grade 4</del>   | 17.2%                              | 24.1% | 39.3% | 62.1%   | 34.5%                              | 44.8% | 48.1% | 58.6%   |
| <del>Grade 6</del>   | 8.3%                               | 25.0% | 13.5% | 45.5%   | 61.8%                              | 33.3% | 70.3% | 75.8%   |
| <del>Grade 4</del>   | 5.4%                               | 20.0% | 46.3% | 45.9%   | 26.3%                              | 39.0% | 43.9% | 55.3%   |
| <del>Grade 6</del>   | 12.2%                              | 19.0% | 11.6% | 31.1%   | 52.4%                              | 57.1% | 60.5% | 45.5%   |
| <del>Grade 4</del>   | 0.0%                               | 18.9% | 28.6% | 36.8%   | 36.1%                              | 37.8% | 43.2% | 30.8%   |
| <del>Grade 6</del>   | 3.6%                               | 18.5% | 21.3% | 43.4%   | 35.7%                              | 44.4% | 55.3% | 54.7%   |
| <del>Grade 4-7</del> | 0.0%                               | 1.8%  | 5.8%  | 9.9%    | 43.8%                              | 50.9% | 53.8% | 63.0%   |



~~Elementary~~ Elementary

# Collegial Learning Walk - grade K

Story: "The Rooster Who Went to His Uncle's Wedding" Day 3

Teacher: ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

Date: 3/9/05

| Check if evidence of:   | Notes / Observations   |
|---|--|
| <b>ORAL LANGUAGE 15 - 30 mins</b>   |  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Morning Message/ Kindergarten News                          | Identified beginning sounds of names, other words<br>(Wednesday, March, Kenneth)   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Morning Message/ Calendar Language                          |  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Phonemic Awareness/ Phoneme Matching/ Matching Final Sounds |  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sharing Literature/ Read Aloud /Before Reading              | allowed good thinking time<br>clarified misconceptions (Roosters can't walk)<br>Identified purpose: listen for problem & characters  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sharing Literature/ Read Aloud /During Reading              | Identified the title, genre, author, illustrator<br>- "What's happening in the story right now?"<br>- "What just happened in the story? Why did this catch his attention?" "What's the rooster problem right now?" |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Develop Listening Comprehension / After Reading                        |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Respond to Literature/ Identify the Story Characters                   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Literature Focus: Compare Oral Traditions                              |  |
| <b>LEARNING TO READ 45 mins</b>   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Phonics/Consonant Xx / Active Beginning / Review the Letters           |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Phonics/Consonant Xx / Active Beginning / Introduce the Letter Name    |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Handwriting / Writing X and x  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Handwriting / Practice/Apply / Guided Practice                         |  |



Kelly Elementary

## Collegial Learning Walk - grade K

Story: "The Rooster Who Went to His Uncle's Wedding" Day 3

Teacher: ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

Date: 3/9/05

| Check if evidence of:   | Notes / Observations   |
|---|--|
| <b>ORAL LANGUAGE 15 - 30 mins</b>   |  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Morning Message/ Kindergarten News                          | - identifying <sup>beginning</sup> sounds - spelling out words<br>- reading sentences * what does a period do? |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Morning Message/ Calendar Language                          | - beginning sounds Wednesday<br>- acknowledging the proper way to listen                                       |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Phonemic Awareness/ Phoneme Matching/ Matching Final Sounds | ending sounds  X  KS<br>- matching ending sounds great job listening to ending sound                           |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sharing Literature/ Read Aloud /Before Reading              | prior knowledge<br>using the title to make predictions<br>* questioning about being fiction * mind picture     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sharing Literature/ Read Aloud /During Reading              | Author/illustrator roles<br>* ways to illustrate<br>* listen for the problem, characters                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Develop Listening Comprehension / After Reading                        |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Respond to Literature/ Identify the Story Characters                   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Literature Focus: Compare Oral Traditions                              |  |
| <b>LEARNING TO READ 45 mins</b>   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Phonics/Consonant Xx / Active Beginning / Review the Letters           |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Phonics/Consonant Xx / Active Beginning / Introduce the Letter Name    |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Handwriting / Writing X and x  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Handwriting / Practice/Apply / Guided Practice                         |  |



~~Kindergarten~~ Elementary

# Collegial Learning Walk - grade K

Story: "The Rooster Who Went to His Uncle's Wedding" Day 3

Teacher: ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

Date: 3/9/05

| Check if evidence of:   | Notes / Observations   |
|---|--|
| <b>ORAL LANGUAGE 15 - 30 mins</b>   |  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Morning Message/ Kindergarten News                          | Identified beginning sounds of names, other words<br>(Wednesday, March, Kenneth)   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Morning Message/ Calendar Language                          |  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Phonemic Awareness/ Phoneme Matching/ Matching Final Sounds |  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sharing Literature/ Read Aloud /Before Reading              | allowed good thinking time<br>clarified misconceptions (Roosters can't walk)<br>Identified purpose: listen for problem characters  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sharing Literature/ Read Aloud /During Reading              | Identified the title, genre, author, illustrator<br>- "What's happening in the story right now?"<br>- "What just happened in the story? Why did this catch his attention?" "What's the rooster problem right now?" |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Develop Listening Comprehension / After Reading                        |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Respond to Literature/ Identify the Story Characters                   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Literature Focus: Compare Oral Traditions                              |  |
| <b>LEARNING TO READ 45 mins</b>   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Phonics/Consonant Xx / Active Beginning / Review the Letters           |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Phonics/Consonant Xx / Active Beginning / Introduce the Letter Name    |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Handwriting / Writing X and x  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Handwriting / Practice/Apply / Guided Practice                         |  |



~~Kindergarten~~ Elementary

# Collegial Learning Walk - grade K

Story: "The Rooster Who Went to His Uncle's Wedding" Day 3


Teacher: Ms. [redacted]

Date: 3/9/05

| Check if evidence of:   | Notes / Observations   |
|---|--|
| <b>ORAL LANGUAGE 15 - 30 mins</b>   |  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Morning Message/ Kindergarten News                          | - identifying <sup>beginning</sup> sounds<br>- reading sentences<br>- spelling out words<br>* what does a period do? |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Morning Message/ Calendar Language                          | - beginning sounds <u>Wednesday</u><br>- acknowledging the proper way to listen                                      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Phonemic Awareness/ Phoneme Matching/ Matching Final Sounds | ending sounds  X  KS<br>- matching ending sounds great job listening to  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sharing Literature/ Read Aloud /Before Reading              | prior knowledge<br>using the title to make predictions<br>* questioning about being <u>fish</u> *mind picture        |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sharing Literature/ Read Aloud /During Reading              | Author / illustrator roles<br>* ways to illustrate<br>* listen for the problem, characters                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Develop Listening Comprehension / After Reading                        |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Respond to Literature/ Identify the Story Characters                   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Literature Focus: Compare Oral Traditions                              |  |
| <b>LEARNING TO READ 45 mins</b>   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Phonics/Consonant Xx / Active Beginning / Review the Letters           |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Phonics/Consonant Xx / Active Beginning / Introduce the Letter Name    |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Handwriting / Writing X and x  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Handwriting / Practice/Apply / Guided Practice                         |  |



Learning Walk  
Grades 2-3

Teacher: 

Grade: 2

Week of December 2005

Focus— On our learning walks today, we would like to see examples of a flex group within the regular reading instructional block. We would like to use the learning walk as a springboard for discussion on flex grouping and it's use and effectiveness in our literacy classrooms.

To help aid in our understanding of your class, please provide us with the following information:

1. How was the flex group chosen? (Yellow Group). Those students who were at some risk on Dibels or Fluency assessment given at beginning of year. Also, I chose those students who had difficulty with reading diagrams based on teacher observations.
2. What data supports your decisions regarding the flex group?
  1. Dibels Tests
  2. See answer one
3. What will the flex group be doing and why?
  - Using the Harcourt "Fluency Builder" and Harcourt Intervention kit for extra practice and instruction in reading diagrams and Fluency. Why? For practice & reinforcement.
4. What will the whole class be doing and why?
  1. Red Group - Partner Reading from the Independent Readers (Advanced Level) Why? They are the better readers and to challenge them.
  2. Green Group - working w/ partner & writing Spelling.
5. What teacher's guide pages correspond with your lesson today?

T-Manual 312B

tells where advanced group is going to be partner reading

4. words on Slates Units 1-12 - To reinforce <sup>the</sup> Harcourt  
weekly letter patterns.
- Also Green Group will be alphabetizing Voc.  
words from Theme 1. To reinforce alphabetizing



Learning Walk Feedback Sheet

Teacher: [redacted]

Grade/subject: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant: [redacted]Date: 12/7/04Time: 10:45-11:15

Reflections regarding flex group:

- Glad to see the 4Sight is being utilized to guide instruction / wonderful reference to Assessment Anchors
- Teacher asked probing questions - pushing students to think about the answer without providing them with the answer immediately - discussion was specific and according to the need
- Flex Group discussed appropriate strategies to utilize and assist with prefix activity
- Students work independently/group self reflecting and monitoring
- Interactive Learning Board reinforced strategies/skills necessary to become successful readers (11)

Evidence of Accountable Talk:

- Clear Expectations - the learning objective was stated and connected to the task on hand (Flex Group)
- Students repeated what their peers stated (checking for understanding (Flex Group) encouraging accountable talk)
- Students had a clear understanding and demonstrate ownership around appropriate reading strategies (11) using them as needed

Wonderings:

- Students were very resourceful - using textbooks, charts partners to complete work

How do you continue to monitor the need of the group?  
What documentation will you keep?

Other:

Learning Walk Feedback Sheet

Teacher: [redacted]Grade/subject: SecondParticipant: [redacted]Date: 12/7/05Time: 10:05-10:45

Reflections regarding flex group:

- Students were appropriately placed by need - this was evident by the students ability to work independently and with a partner on the <sup>task</sup> at hand while the teacher worked with <sup>group</sup>
- Students verbalized why/what regarding assigned task
- Teacher facilitated discussion which checked for understanding/developing strong comprehension skills

Evidence of Accountable Talk:

- There were clear expectations for all students - students self reflected and explained what good work look likes (clip-book activity)
  - Students understood the importance of turning to their partner for assistance
  - Teacher asked probing questions pushing students to be
- Wonderings:
- Visuals were provided to students (text to word connection) Accountable for learning
  - Clear <sup>not</sup> students work with partners/encourage peers this was evident the assistance provided their peers within the flex group

How do you continue to monitor, prioritize the need of the group?  
 Other: what documentation do you keep regarding the need of group?



Learning Walk Feedback Sheet

Teacher: ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~Grade/subject: Ready 2Participant: ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~Date: 12/7/05Time: 10:05 - 10:40

Reflections regarding flex group:

Great! It was evident by teacher's question, these students needed extra help with fluency and diagrams. Use of several diagrams!

Great! All students on task and working cooperatively

Evidence of Accountable Talk:

Discuss on diagrams - relating to story

Wonderings:

Spelling partner - Are these students in need of more practice or just an extra activity?

Does using data help you identify student needs than before?

How does  
Does using flex grouping help you with instruction?

Other:

Great classroom management! Students know what to do!

Sasha <sup>+ Devon</sup> Glenn about working with partner "It's nice because you don't have to figure it out by yourself" (ABC)

Plus + Partner reading - Stories related to "Seed to Plant"  
Text to text



Learning Walk Feedback Sheet

Teacher: [redacted]

Grade/subject: 2nd reading

Participant: [redacted]

Date: 12-7-05

Time: 10:05-10:45

Reflections regarding flex group:

- good use of data to choose flex group topic
- everyone participated

Evidence of Accountable Talk:

Wonderings:

Other:

- partners worked well together
- everyone knew what their task was
- everyone was engaged

# Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills

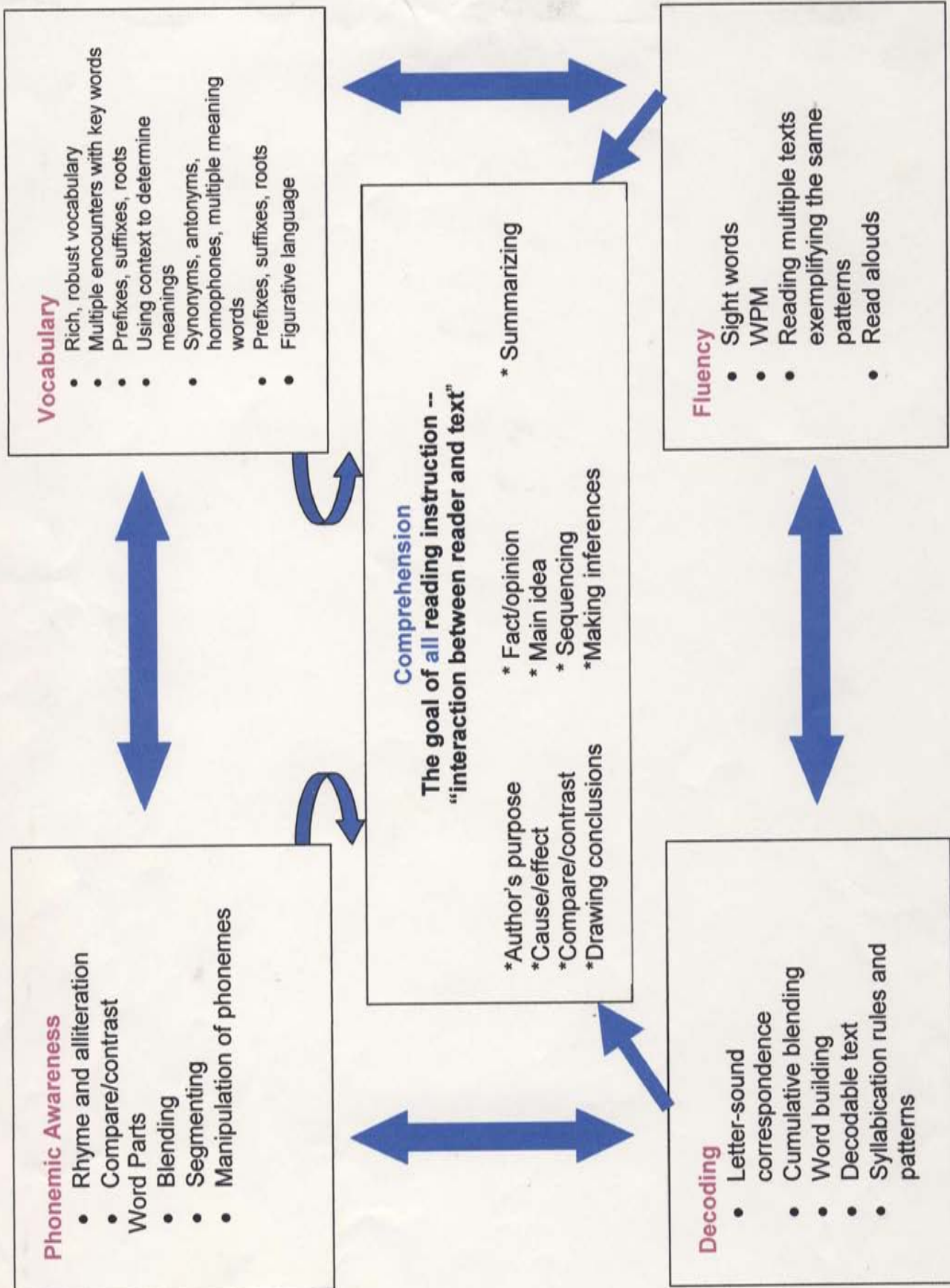
## Second Grade Class List Report

District: **[REDACTED]**  
 School: **[REDACTED]** Elementary  
 Date: September, 2005-2006  
 Class: J2-19 **[REDACTED]**

Note: Scores provide an indication of performance only. If there is any concern about the accuracy of scores for an individual student, performance should be verified by retesting to validate need for support.

| Student    | Nonsense Word Fluency<br>Goal: 50 letter sounds |            | Oral Reading Fluency<br>Goal: 44 words per minute |       | Retell Fluency<br>Percent of ORF |           | Instructional Recommendations |      |  |
|------------|---|------------|---|-------|----------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|------|--|
|            | Score   | Percentile | Status  | Score | Status                           | Score     |                               |      |  |
| [REDACTED] | 13  | <1         | Deficit   | 13    | 8                                | At Risk   | 11                            | 85%  | Intensive - Needs Substantial Intervention |
| [REDACTED] | 24  | 8          | Deficit   | 26    | 16                               | Some Risk | 15                            | 58%  | Strategic - Additional Intervention        |
| [REDACTED] | 44  | 40         | Emerging  | 26    | 16                               | Some Risk | 18                            | 69%  | Strategic - Additional Intervention        |
| [REDACTED] | 31  | 16         | Emerging  | 29    | 22                               | Some Risk | 11                            | 38%  | Strategic - Additional Intervention        |
| [REDACTED] | 48  | 48         | Emerging  | 30    | 26                               | Some Risk | 11                            | 37%  | Strategic - Additional Intervention        |
| [REDACTED] | 16  | 5          | Deficit   | 31    | 29                               | Some Risk | 22                            | 71%  | Strategic - Additional Intervention        |
| [REDACTED] | 69  | 75         | Established                                       | 34    | 34                               | Some Risk | 13                            | 38%  | Strategic - Additional Intervention        |
| [REDACTED] | 95  | 96         | Established                                       | 41    | 49                               | Some Risk | 28                            | 68%  | Strategic - Additional Intervention        |
| [REDACTED] | 82  | 84         | Established                                       | 42    | 54                               | Some Risk | 10                            | 24%  | Strategic - Additional Intervention        |
| [REDACTED] | 45  | 44         | Emerging  | 45    | 63                               | Low Risk  | 35                            | 78%  | Benchmark - At Grade Level                 |
| [REDACTED] | 38  | 27         | Emerging  | 47    | 66                               | Low Risk  | 13                            | 28%  | Benchmark - At Grade Level                 |
| [REDACTED] | 50  | 51         | Established                                       | 53    | 69                               | Low Risk  | 43                            | 81%  | Benchmark - At Grade Level                 |
| [REDACTED] | 76  | 82         | Established                                       | 64    | 81                               | Low Risk  | 38                            | 59%  | Benchmark - At Grade Level                 |
| [REDACTED] | 67  | 71         | Established                                       | 73    | 84                               | Low Risk  | 23                            | 32%  | Benchmark - At Grade Level                 |
| [REDACTED] | 70  | 77         | Established                                       | 86    | 93                               | Low Risk  | 47                            | 55%  | Benchmark - At Grade Level                 |
| [REDACTED] | 61  | 63         | Established                                       | 93    | 96                               | Low Risk  | 36                            | 39%  | Benchmark - At Grade Level                 |
|            | 51.8  | Mean       |   | 45.8  | Mean                             |           | 23.4                          | Mean |  |

# What A Balanced Literacy Program Looks Like





~~Kelly~~ Elementary

2004-05

Elements of a Balanced Literacy Program

### Peer Feedback Sheet

Teacher's Name ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

Peer's Name ~~XXXX~~ ~~XXXX~~

Date: Jan. 26, 2005

Description of lesson: Reading - Day 2 - Ocean

#### Evidence of Literacy Elements:

Phonemic Awareness:

Vocabulary: Review sheets  
generated - quick review (used context to determine meaning)  
gravitational, gravity - connected to life (jumping)  
bulge - How does the word bulge go along w/our story?  
Encouraged students to look back in the book to find  
answers  
energy-related to life  
Decoding:

Fluency:

Reading strategy - adjusting reading rate  
Students read the story aloud

Set a purpose for reading ~ read questions first  
Reading strategy ~ ~~reading to clarify~~ adjusting reading rate

Used the globe to illustrate points

What's the main idea? What details will help me understand this better?

Comprehension:

Prediction ~ Will check in story to see how it is used.

Skill - Main Idea ~ students defined in own terms

Details give us a better picture to help us <sup>better</sup> understand what we've read

Graphic organizer - identified purpose

~~Related main idea to writing~~

Questions that pushed understanding to the highest level:

What is energy? Why do we need it? How can we get energy?

Why don't we want you to dive into shallow (vocal.) water?

Any additional comments or questions:

Your expectations are very clear. You have a great rapport with your students.

# ~~XXXX~~ School Parent Night

November 16, 2004

Workshop: Sensational Sight Words

Room 3: ~~And. Nant~~

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12.

# ~~XXXX~~ School Parent Night

November 16, 2004

Workshop: Sensational Sight Words

Room 2: ~~Ms. Sessions~~

1.

~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~

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~~Rocky~~ School Parent Night  
November 16, 2004

p

Workshop: Sensational Sight Words

Room 11: ~~Mrs. [unclear]~~

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12.



# Sensational Sight Word Night

## \*Introduction of Teachers:

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~  
~~XXXXXXXXXX~~  
~~XXXXXXXXXX~~  
~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

## \* Rationale / History

## \* Dolch Sight Word List

- by Age
- by Category

## \* Games

- Squirt & Spell
- In the Hat
- Say-Spell-Say
- I'm Thinking of...
- Word Ring

## \* Questions / Comments

## About Sight Words

**Sight words** are words that usually have to be memorized.

**Sight words** are sometimes referred to as "*High Frequency Words*," because they appear many times throughout our reading.

The sooner the child can read a word (any word) by sight, the smoother the flow of reading will be.

When a child has to stop and sound out each word, it not only affects the flow of reading, but it also affects the child's comprehension of what he is reading.

Once a child recognizes a word, the flow of reading will improve.

## **Why Do We Teach Sight Words?**

We teach these words since they are essential for automatic or fluent reading with emergent and developing readers.

On the other hand, with an emphasis on phonics, it does become an issue: **Why would we teach words that are not phonetically based?**

Again, sight words that we teach are generally those from the 220 most common used words in our language.

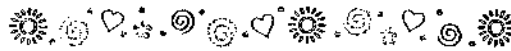
## **SIGHT WORDS**

A child's name will probably be his or her first sight word. Other words that are recognized by many preschoolers are love, to and from. Children often use these words to make cards or label gifts. The words have meaning and are useful so the children remember them. This is the early stage of developing a sight word vocabulary.

A child will need to develop a fairly extensive sight word vocabulary in order to learn to read. Phonics is good and helpful, but the readers must also recognize a great number of words as sight words.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Learning Sight Words at Home



*Dear Families,*

**A**s part of our literacy program, your child will be learning “sight words.” Sight words are words that children encounter frequently in print. These are also words that children use frequently in their writing. Learning these words “by sight” will assist your child in becoming a stronger reader and writer.

To help your child learn these words, cut apart the attached word cards. Over a period of a week or so, invite your child to sort the words into four groups: Words I Can Read, Words I Can Spell, Words I Can Read and Spell, Words I Need to Learn. Encourage your child to practice the words at home. Try setting goals: How many new words each week would your child like to learn to read and/or spell? To help your child practice, try these quick tips:

- ☆ Store the word cards your child needs to learn in resealable bags. Take them with you wherever you and your child go. Practice them in line at the grocery store, on trips, and other places where you have a few minutes together!
- ☆ Let your child select a handful of sight word cards at random, then find the same words around the house—for example, on packages of food or in newspaper headlines.
- ☆ Play Hide-and-Seek Sight Words. Hide ten word cards. Let your child find them and then read them to you.

Look for more sight word activities coming home with your child throughout the year.

Sincerely,

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Learning Sight Words at Home

*Dear Families,*

**T**he more sight words your child knows, the stronger his or her reading and writing skills will be. Sight words are words that appear frequently in print. These same words are among those used most frequently by children in their writing. When children build their sight word vocabulary, they become better readers and spellers. Try these easy activities to make practicing sight words a playful experience!

Skip-count with words:  
Start with the first word  
on the list. Say it, skip  
the next, read the next,  
and so on. Repeat the  
activity, this time starting  
with the second word  
on the list.

Say each  
word, then  
spell it,  
clapping once  
for each letter.

Sing the words to  
the tune of a  
familiar song,  
such as "Twinkle,  
Twinkle, Little Star."

Give each letter in the  
alphabet a number from  
1 to 26. Guess which sight  
word on the list will be  
worth the most points.  
Find out!

is i = 9 s = 20  
is = 29

Read the sight  
words as slowly  
as you can. Try it  
again. This time  
say them fast!

## Sight Words to Practice

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

1.

## Squirt and Spell

Shaving cream on a desk makes a fun place to practice spelling sight words. Try this activity at the end of the day for shiny desks the next day.

1 Give each child a squirt of shaving cream on his or her desk. Let children use their hands to spread out the shaving cream over the desk surface. This will also give them a chance to just have fun feeling the shaving cream.

2 Explain that you are going to say a sight word and that you want children to try writing the word with their finger in the shaving cream.

3 Take a walk around to check children's spelling, then have them wipe their words away and get ready for a new word.

4 When you're ready to wrap up, children can use paper towels or sponges to wipe away the shaving cream. Now you've got stronger spellers and clean desks!

2.

## In the Hat

A magician's hat and wand invite children to practice sight words again and again.

1 Make a magician's hat by cutting a black tagboard brim to fit around the top of an oatmeal box that you've painted black. Make a magic wand by cutting out a star and decorating it with glitter, gluing it to a dowel or ruler, then tying on curly ribbon.

2 Copy and cut apart the sight word cards on pages 7-11. Place them in the hat.

3 Wave the wand over the hat and make up a chant— for example, *Abacadabra. Abracadee. What will I pull from this hat? Watch and see!* Pull a word out of the hat (better if you have a black hankchief to obscure the act). Read it.

4 Pass around the hat. Let children make up their own chants and then pull out a word and read it.



### 3. I'm Thinking of...

---

Play this game to reinforce sight word spelling and sounds. You'll want to display the sight words you are teaching on a word wall or chart.

1 Start the game by saying "I'm thinking of a sight word that starts with the same sound as [say a word that starts with the same sound as your target sight word] and has [number of letters]."

2 Invite children to write down the word when they think they know it.

3 Continue playing, changing the types of clues you give. For example, you could say, "I'm thinking of a word that starts with the same letter as Becky's name, but it has two fewer letters." (The sight word *big* would fit this description.)

4 When children are familiar with the procedure, let them take turns providing the clues.

### 4. Word Ring

---

A creative way to store the sight word list.

1 Write the sight words that you would like to practice on an index card.

2 Next, punch a hole in the upper left hand corner of each card.

3 Last, attach each card to the metal ring.



5.

### Say Spell Say

---

A rhythmic chant and clapping activity is a fun way to practice spelling sight words.

- 1 The child will look at the sight word from the word ring and then say the word out loud.
- 2 Next, the child will spell the word out loud. As the child says a letter they have to clap.
- 3 Once the child has spelled the word out they repeat the sight word.

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg

Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss

## Overview: How Children Learn to Read Words

Writing is a fairly recent invention, but powerful in improving human intelligence. The first writing was logographic, where a symbol represented the meaning of a word. This meant a vast number of symbols to learn. In a later system, symbols representing syllables were introduced, a shift to sound-based writing. With the development of the alphabet, writing used an economical group of symbols representing speech phonemes, the vocal gestures from which words are constructed in a language. However, using an alphabet requires sufficient familiarity with phonemes to recognize them in spoken words, and this can be a serious hurdle. Phonemes are produced very rapidly in ordinary speech (10-20 per second), and the vocal gestures overlap, making phoneme boundaries difficult to discern.

We're used to thinking of two routes to word recognition: sight and decoding. However, all skilled readers acquire sight words, and all are expert decoders. Moreover, we can recognize words by analogizing, stringing together pronounceable word parts, or contextual guessing. Sight recognition means instant recognition without analysis. Decoding involves translation; although early decoding requires audible sounding out and blending, later decoding is fast and silent. To analogize, we recall a word with the same spelling pattern and make the unfamiliar word rhyme with the remembered word. The pronounceable word parts strategy requires a large store of sight chunks, such as *ing*, *ight*, and *tion*, that readers can string together to identify words. Contextual guessing is using the rest of sentence to guess unrecognized words. Because guesswork is slow, effortful, and not very reliable,

Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg

readers rapidly abandon it as they gain decoding skill and sight vocabulary.

The problem in reading words is to access the lexicon, i.e., the store of words and associated information in memory. Before we ever learn to read, we store an incredible web of words with their pronunciations, meanings, syntax, and sometimes spelling data. The problem in reading is to access the lexicon, i.e., to locate the entry in memory from its spelling. Access routes of skilled readers are memorable (they can call up a word easily), reliable (they get the same word every time they see its spelling), and easily learned (in just a few trials). But accurate, reliable access routes are not good enough: To save resources for comprehension, we need effortless access to words. Thus sight word access is the goal of phonics instruction.

Children don't just jump into decoding and acquiring sight vocabulary. They move through predictable phases of using the alphabet more and more skillfully. Before children learn to use the alphabet, they employ a default strategy of attaching a visual cue to meaning. This visual cue strategy explains why very young children can recognize many words in their normal surroundings, for example, reading McDonald's with the arches logo. They are simply recognizing pictures. When children gain alphabetic insight, they begin to use phonetic cues instead of visual cues. They use some letters (usually at the beginning of a word) to cue some of the phonemes in the word, providing a systematic access route to the word in the lexicon (though not a reliable route).

Reliable access comes in the alphabetic phase, when children learn to decode words from spelling alone. Alphabetic phase reading allows children to

Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss

Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg

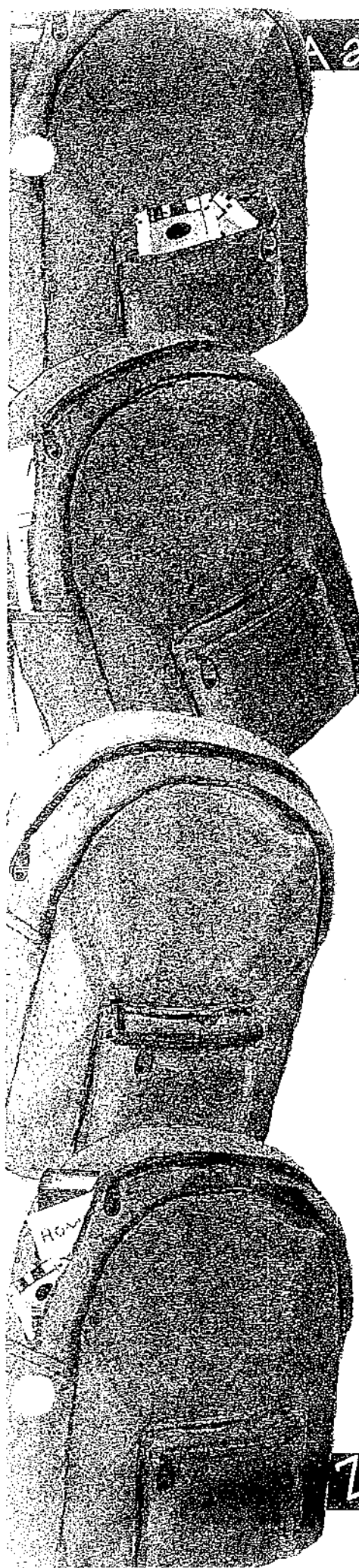
Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss

rapidly acquire sight vocabulary. Contrary to past beliefs, sight-word learning does not depend on rote association. Children learn sight words in just a few *quality* encounters. Quality encounters connect letters in a spelling to phonemes in the pronunciation, usually by sounding out and blending. In other words, we typically learn sight words through careful decoding. Though decoding demands great attention in young readers, it sets up reliable access routes to retrieve the word. Once the access route is established, the tools to build it (correspondence rules) drop out. The spelling becomes a meaningful symbol of spoken word (i.e., it "looks like" the word). Learning to decode dramatically reduces the number of trials to sight recognition from an average of 35 trials to an average of 4 trials.

How do we lead children to the full alphabetic phase where they can sound out words? Phonics is designed to accomplish this goal. Phonics is simply instruction in decoding. It involves teaching correspondence rules and how to blend. Two types of phonics have been developed: explicit and analytic. Analytic phonics is designed to avoid pronouncing phonemes in isolation. This necessitates roundabout explanations, and it presumes phoneme awareness rather than modeling how phonemes are cued and assembled in decoding. In explicit phonics, teachers pronounce phonemes in isolation to model how to sound out and blend. Studies show that explicit phonics is more effective in leading children to early reading independence.

One other factor has been shown to be important in phonics: decodable texts. Decodable texts are simply texts in which most of the words can be decoded using correspondences children have

Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz



Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg

Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll

Mm Nn

Oo Pp

Qq Rr

Ss

Tt Uu

Vv Ww

Xx Yy Zz

learned to date in their phonics program. While such control temporarily restricts the literature value of practice texts, research shows that it induces a decoding strategy in beginning readers. Because the phonics they learn works to unlock the words in their stories, they rely on a decoding strategy in reading. This helps them gain sight words rapidly, and also helps them figure out patterns not explicitly taught in phonics lessons. As they expand their sight vocabularies and decoding power, controls on decodability can rapidly be removed, allowing them to read and enjoy children's literature.

The problem with alphabetic-phase reading is that it is slow and effortful. Fortunately, as children learn sight words and sight chunks, they learn shortcuts to word recognition. They remember chunks of spellings for quick assembly. These chunks are pronounceable word parts that can be recognized without analysis. Using chunks allows readers to decode polysyllabic words by stringing together the familiar parts. The key to expert decoding seems to be learning vowel correspondences--the heart of every syllable. Also, it takes lots of reading practice to acquire sight words and sight chunks. Children must be led to read voluntarily as a leisure time activity to take on this level of practice.

Should our goal for beginning readers be to remember words by sight or decode? The answer is both. To progress toward reading expertise, children must learn to decode and to read words by sight. However, sight word reading depends on decoding--knowledge of our alphabetic system. Thus, learning to decode must come first.

Zz Xx Yy Ww Vv Uu Tt



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black

white

yellow

green



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ten

first

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now

please

look

today



I



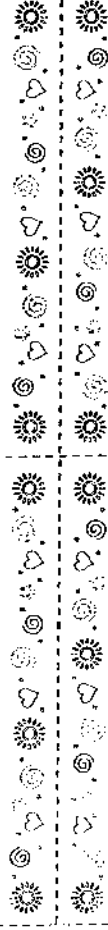
she



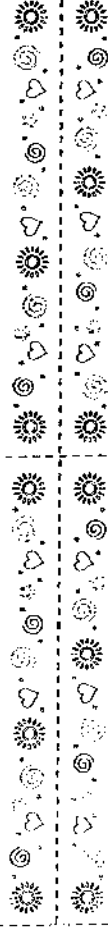
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me



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your



how



why




what



who



when



where



which



will



with



**Amato, Eileen**

**From:** Fortier, Jonathan (US - Pittsburgh) [jfortier@deloitte.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 08, 2004 12:46 PM  
**To:** eamato@v[REDACTED]schools.org  
**Subject:** RE: Oct 8 budget

Could you ask him to be prepared with an estimate of supplies required for the proposed projects? It would be good to know what the expected cost of paint/brushes/shrubs etc. - we can try and have some of that covered. I have a meeting at 11am that morning and will need to provide a proposed budget.

Also, what numbers should I use to reach both of you?

Thanks!

**Jonathan C. Fortier**  
Deloitte Consulting LLP  
Tel: +1 412 402 5930  
Fax: +1 412 402 2875  
Mobile: +1 412 445 1322  
jfortier@deloitte.com  
www.deloitte.com

-----Original Message-----

**From:** eamato@v[REDACTED]schools.org [mailto:eamato@v[REDACTED]schools.org]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 08, 2004 10:27 AM  
**To:** Fortier, Jonathan (US - Pittsburgh)  
**Subject:** RE: Oct 8 budget

OK sounds great!!

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Fortier, Jonathan (US - Pittsburgh) [mailto:jfortier@deloitte.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 08, 2004 10:10 AM  
**To:** eamato@v[REDACTED]schools.org  
**Subject:** RE: Oct 8 budget

That would work....I will still be in Denver - but I can talk with both of you on the phone. It would honestly be better to get back to them before Friday, I don't want to miss out on possible funding, but if that is the only time, then we will have to go with it. Let me know...I hope all is well! ;)  
Thanks, Jonathan

**Jonathan C. Fortier**  
Deloitte Consulting LLP  
Tel: +1 412 402 5930  
Fax: +1 412 402 2875  
Mobile: +1 412 445 1322  
jfortier@deloitte.com  
www.deloitte.com

-----Original Message-----

**From:** eamato@v[REDACTED]schools.org [mailto:eamato@v[REDACTED]schools.org]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 08, 2004 6:13 AM  
**To:** Fortier, Jonathan (US - Pittsburgh)  
**Subject:** RE: Oct 8 budget

Jonathan, Can we meet Friday at 7:30?

9/21/2004

## Exhibit B.16 - Email

**Amato, Eileen**

**From:** Fortier, Jonathan (US - Pittsburgh) [jfortier@DELOITTE.com]  
**Sent:** Friday, September 17, 2004 1:13 PM  
**To:** eamato@[REDACTED]schools.org  
**Subject:** FW: [REDACTED] Elementary - Budget Approval

Mrs. Amato - Good to meet with you and Ken today.

Good news - the message below approved the proposed budget!

My idea - Can we put 4-5 people to work doing some technology/computing work? If you have computers that need networked for a new lab, or maybe we could procure some computers from donors between now and then. The crew of 40-50 coming in are tech savvy and we could put some of them to work doing that!

So - there is some more money to be allocated, and if we can think of a good project - outside/inside/computer related, let's brainstorm.

- Jonathan  
412.445.1322

**Jonathan C. Fortier**

Deloitte Consulting LLP

Tel: +1 412 402 5930

Fax: +1 412 402 2875

Mobile: +1 412 445 1322

jfortier@deloitte.com

www.deloitte.com

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Sohocki, Heather (US - Pittsburgh)  
**Sent:** Friday, September 17, 2004 12:05 PM  
**To:** Fortier, Jonathan (US - Pittsburgh)  
**Cc:** Rothe, Lora (US - Pittsburgh); Pracht, Susan (US - Pittsburgh); Sigler, Michelle (US - Pittsburgh); Sohocki, Heather (US - Pittsburgh)  
**Subject:** [REDACTED] Elementary - Budget Approval

Hi Jonathan - wanted to send you notification that your budget request has been approved. Below is the amount that you have been approved for:

| Project Expenses |          |
|------------------|----------|
| Kelly Elementary |          |
| 6 Yards Mulch    | \$150.00 |
| 4 Yards Topsoil  | \$100.00 |
| 30 Shrubs        | \$350.00 |
| 25 Work Gloves   | \$75.00  |

The total is \$675 - We recently found out we have some additional money to use if necessary. Please let me know as soon as possible whether you will need additional funds and we can allocate that to you.

We found ponchos already purchased by the firm, they will be provided for rain.

My records indicate Deloitte will be providing breakfast, lunch and snacks for the volunteers - this will be provided by the logistics committee.

9/20/2004

Have a great day!

**Heather Sohocki**  
Deloitte Consulting LLP  
Direct: 717 526 0430 x5123  
Main: 412 402 5175  
hsohocki@deloitte.com  
www.deloitte.com

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9/20/2004

## Exhibit B.16 - Email

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Fortier, Jonathan (US - Pittsburgh) [mailto:jofortier@deloitte.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 07, 2004 3:10 PM  
**To:** eamato@[REDACTED]schools.org  
**Subject:** RE: Oct 8 budget

I'll try to be available anytime I can get both of you on the phone. If you are both in different places - I'll use 3 way calling so we can all be on the line. Just let me know a time and the best number for each of you. Thanks! - Jonathan

**Jonathan C. Fortier**  
Deloitte Consulting LLP  
Tel: +1 412 402 5930  
Fax: +1 412 402 2875  
Mobile: +1 412 445 1322  
jofortier@deloitte.com  
www.deloitte.com

-----Original Message-----

**From:** eamato@[REDACTED]schools.org  
[mailto:eamato@[REDACTED]schools.org]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 07, 2004 12:58 PM  
**To:** Fortier, Jonathan (US - Pittsburgh)  
**Subject:** RE: Oct 8 budget

I'll see how his schedule looks and the sooner the better... any particular time OK?

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Fortier, Jonathan (US - Pittsburgh)  
[mailto:jofortier@deloitte.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 07, 2004 2:48 PM  
**To:** eamato@[REDACTED]schools.org  
**Subject:** Oct 8 budget

Eileen - I hope the school year is off to a good start! I need to spend a few minutes with you and the facility supervisor to determine a budget for October 8th. We need to have this in asap so let me know when a good time would be to talk. Thanks! - Jonathan

412.445.1322

**Jonathan C. Fortier**  
Deloitte Consulting LLP  
Tel: +1 412 402 5930  
Fax: +1 412 402 2875  
Mobile: +1 412 445 1322  
jofortier@deloitte.com  
www.deloitte.com

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Child Study Coordinator ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

Report of Students Processed up through 11/4/05

1. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ - Parents requested an evaluation for 9/2/04. They had ~~XXXX~~ tested via the Summer and had an ADHD diagnosis. I met with the parents to explain the referral process and assist them in completing the parent questionnaire form. I distributed and collected a data collection packet for Rochelle and forwarded all completed documents to ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~. ~~XXXX~~ is now receiving spec. ed. Services.

2. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ - Mother requested an evaluation for ~~XXXX~~ <sup>on 9/14/04</sup> due to his behavior impacting negatively on his academic progress. I completed the necessary paperwork for Mrs. ~~XXXX~~, circulated and collected an MDZ data collection packet, and forwarded all materials to ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~. I also worked with ~~XXXX~~ on several occasions when his behavior was disrupting his class and also observed him several times in various locations around the school. ~~XXXX~~ is now receiving spec. ed. Services.



3. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ - ~~XXXXXX~~ mother, ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~, requested an evaluation on 9/23/04 due to a history of academic difficulties in another school district. I met with mom and gave her all necessary forms to get the process started. I also observed ~~XXXXXX~~ in a large and small group instructional settings. I distributed and collected an MDE data collection packet. All forms were forwarded to ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~. ~~XXXXXX~~ was tested in Dec. 04. We are currently waiting for his psychological report to be completed.

4. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ - ~~XXXXXX~~ mother, ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~, requested a psychological evaluation 8/31/04 at Mental Administration. I observed ~~XXXXXX~~ several times and circulated an MDE Data Collection packet. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ filled out her forms at 418 Wallace. All completed documents were sent to ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~. ~~XXXXXX~~ mother came in for a Child Study Meeting in Dec. 04. We discussed whether Thomas needed tested or not. Mom felt a strong need for the testing. ~~XXXXXX~~ is scheduled to be tested very soon.

5.

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ entered ~~XXXX~~ School Oct. 1, 2004. She began to experience academic difficulties almost immediately. Ms. ~~XXXXXX~~ referred ~~XXXX~~ to the Child Study Coordinator, Oct. 11, 2004. I met with Mrs. ~~XXXX~~ to determine how to proceed because ~~XXXX~~ had a diagnosis of ADHD. Ms. ~~XXXX~~ felt ~~XXXX~~ should go back to kindergarten. I called ~~XXXX~~'s mom many times to set up a meeting. Mrs. ~~XXXX~~ came in for a meeting but agreed by phone that ~~XXXX~~ could go to kindergarten for academics only. When it became apparent this was not enough intervention, I again began calling home for Mrs. ~~XXXX~~ per man, to schedule a meeting. We even attempted to set up a home visit. Around the end of Dec. ~~XXXX~~ left the district. The home number and cell phone number were disconnected.

6.

~~XXXXXX~~ - Mrs. ~~XXXX~~ 4th grade homeroom teacher, requested ~~XXXX~~ be moved back to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade due to a lack of basic skills. She made the request very early in the year. Mrs. ~~XXXX~~, mother, refused the suggestion. I called Mrs. ~~XXXX~~ over a dozen times to come in and meet with the Child Study Team. I observed ~~XXXX~~ in class and he was lost. ~~XXXX~~ failed all subjects on his report card and he sleeps most of the day. Mrs. ~~XXXX~~ finally came in for a meeting on 12/21/04. We discussed many interventions and she agreed to psychological testing. His MDE packet is being circulated right now.

1. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ - ~~NAME~~ was referred to the Child Study Team 9/16/04 due to extremely disruptive classroom behavior. Several behavior intervention plans were implemented within the classroom. ~~NAME~~ behavior continued to be oppositional defiant. As of 12/2/04 ~~NAME~~ had 60 office referrals resulting in 11 school suspensions, out of school suspensions and lunch detentions. Mrs. ~~NAME~~, ~~NAME~~'s mom, agreed to psychological testing on 10/20/04. ~~NAME~~ was tested in spec. of a. The data collection packet I circulated was sent to the administration building. We are currently awaiting the results / report.

8. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ - ~~NAME~~ was referred to the Child Study Team 11/2/04. Academic concerns included lack of focus on teacher and lessons and poor retention skills. A Child Study Team was held 11/10/04 with Mrs. ~~NAME~~, ~~NAME~~'s mother. Four different interventions were developed to increase time on task leading to better retention of skills. ~~NAME~~ is still being monitored by the Child Study Team. His mother will be in to review his plan within a two weeks to assess next steps. All interventions are still in place.

Child Study Report—~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

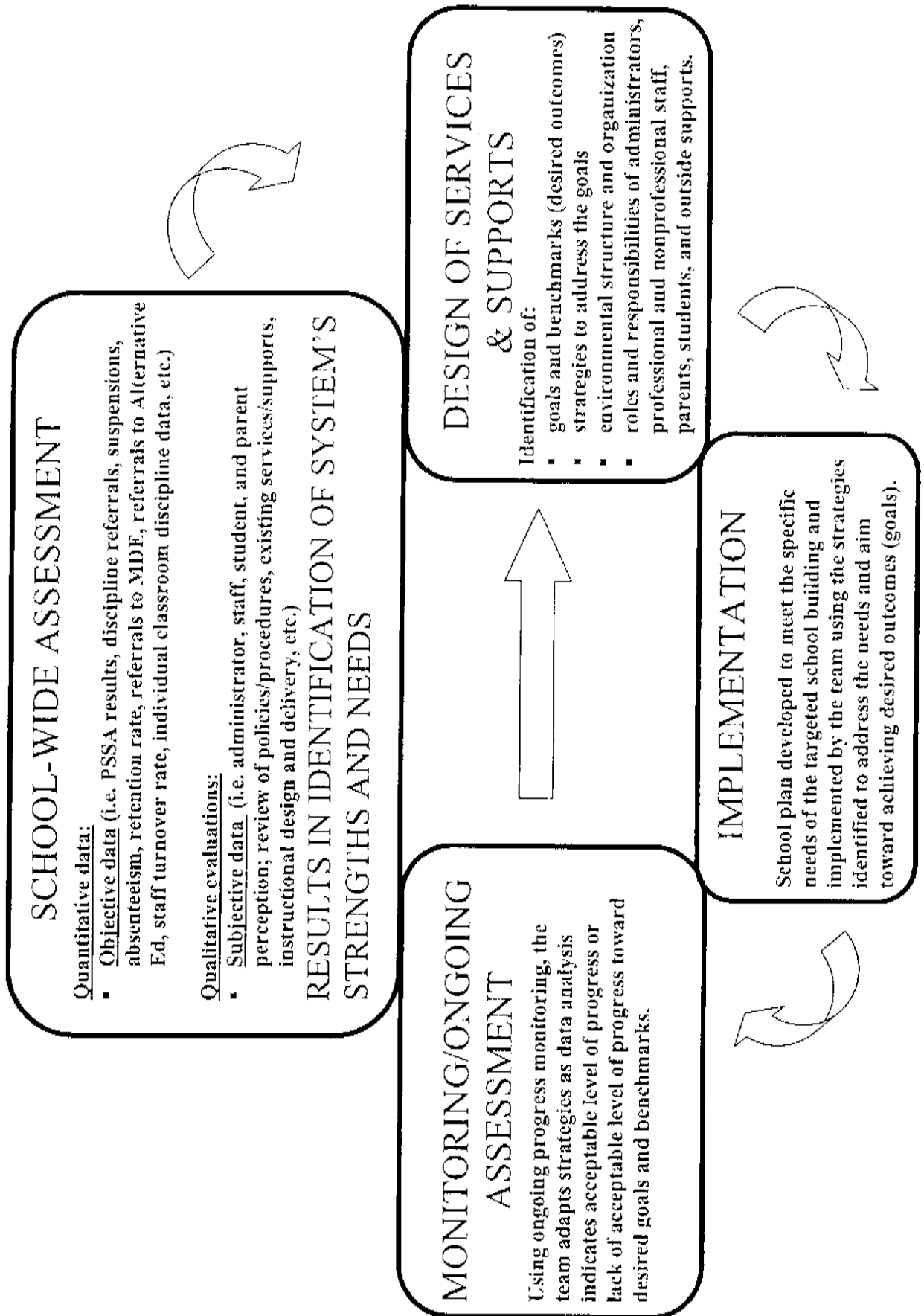
~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ was referred to the Child Study team by her homeroom teacher, Mrs. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~, on 9/17/04. She was having severe academic difficulties, was often confused following simple directions, and having a hard time staying focused on her work. Mrs. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ reported that second grade work was too hard for her.

The Child Study team met with Mrs. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ on 10/4/04. Mrs. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ could not attend but was given a verbal summary of the meeting. Many interventions were discussed and implemented for a period of 30 days. Mrs. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ and her intern worked with ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ within the classroom on developing a knowledge of first grade sight words, word building, and basic addition and subtraction math facts. Mrs. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~, reading interventionist, worked with ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ 2 times a day, 5 days a week for one half hour sessions each. She directed her instruction toward story vocabulary development and reinforcement, story comprehension, and decoding skills. Mrs. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~, Child Study Coordinator, worked with ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ one half hour every day, 5 days a week to reinforce her daily math lesson and practice math facts. Mrs. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ was given a set of sight word flashcards to work with ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ at home.

Even with all these interventions in place, ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ still received an F in reading, an F in math, and a D in language arts on her first report card. Jade really tries hard to do well in school but is not retaining any concepts being taught. Further testing at this time is necessary to determine if a learning problem exists.

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ is waiting to be tested as of  
11/4/05,

# PROCEDURAL FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL-WIDE EFFECTIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT





# Adams Elementary School Core Team Minutes

Exhibit B.21 - Core Team Minutes

Today's Date: April 6, 2004

Next meeting date: April 13 @ 2PM

Minutes by: [Signature]

| Topic   | Summary of discussion points   | decision made & responsible party  | Expected outcomes   | Target date |
|---|--|--|---|-------------|
| Formation of Emotional & Behavioral Support Core Team | <p>Team make-up should include Administrator, IST leader, behavior specialist, counselor, Special Ed teachers, etc. Critical factors to consider when developing team include:</p> <p>a) ability to give 1 year commitment; b) have established credibility within school; c) work well as team member; d) be able to devote necessary time.</p>   | Team members were selected/ <b>Ms. Amato</b> to approach each person to assess interest and garner commitment  | Establishment of school-wide system for managing disruptive behavior.   | 13-Apr      |
| Core Team roles and responsibilities                  | <p>Establish mechanism for analyzing service needs and gaps, and for assessing problem areas within system. Follow-up with developing methods for filling gaps and establishing solutions for managing problem areas.</p> <p>Establish unequivocal, clear, behavioral expectations and routines throughout school: a) identify critical behavioral expectations and routines in all areas of school; b) task analyze the routines and behavioral expectations; c) teach to all students systematically what is expected; d) maintain changes through booster sessions. What is expected in each common area?</p>   |  | Increase student cooperation in & outside of classroom. Decrease teacher stress.  |             |
|   | <p>Examine/research school-wide organizational practices: a) ecological arrangements such as unsafe physical layout of building, student schedules that allow for conduct problems, hallways/cafeteria/exits and common area problems such as congestion that may result in increased chaos and disruptions in area, mixing grades in cafeteria and recess to reduce possibility of problems, one-way in halls, etc.; b) discipline policy and procedures: review and revise where needed to clarify, expand areas, set standards for student performance; d) develop school-wide program for promoting positive social behaviors (clear and consistent behavioral expectations with common thresholds throughout, active supervision of common areas during peak use time, stabilize response to problem behaviors across all domains such as lunchroom and playground, etc.)</p> | <p><b>1) Post 1-way signs in halls; 2) After lunch process:</b> a) All teachers pick up own students after lunch; b) students go to room only- no stopping for restroom; c) one class in restroom at a time- no deviating, as designated by teacher on duty; d) implement bathroom schedule per floor; e) class goes to restroom as whole; f) 15 minutes per class max. <b>Hall passes-</b> too many students roam halls during classtime. Possible consequences for roaming w/o pass: after school detention; writing assignment; miss recess; lunch detention; decision points; phone call home; lose hall privilege for week. team to decide next week. teacher responsible for hall passes- place by door and student completes. Consistency is key. [Signature] to make copies.</p> | <p>Reduce hallway confusion, noise and chaos. Manage spillover from common areas into regular classrooms. Create safer, more predictable environment for all students. Possible increase in instructional time in all classes- improved grades and standardized scores.</p> | 6-May       |



Exhibit B.21 - Core Team Minutes

|  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Core Team<br>roles and<br>responsibilities | Establish classroom meetings as both problem solving and skills groups for teaching pro-social behavior. Skills groups should focus on teaching children very basic problem solving, conflict resolution and assertive communications skills.  |  |  |  |
|  | Establish video-based family management program- a) use such tapes as <u>SOS for Parents</u> to teach parents more effective home interventions with children who have a history of referrals for discipline to the school; b) negotiate contract with school of social work/counseling/nursing to have grad students serve as family specialists to coach and assist family to manage disruptive behaviors at home; c) have grad students create links between school and home to strengthen cooperation and participation from families. |  |  |  |
|  | Active supervision: a) all staff work halls, floor, lunchroom and playground areas during high student movement and increased transition times (before school starts, when school ends, in and out of lunchroom, etc.) first 3-4 weeks; b) staff to serve as preventive measure to decrease noise level, confusion, jostling/horseplay, etc. Goal is to completely cover high traffic areas and provide a balanced ratio of teachers to students. Active supervision can be decreased after a few weeks.                                   |  |  |  |
|  | One-to-one tutoring; research indicates that there is an inverse correlation between reading level/academic success and problem behaviors. Students who read better are less inclined to have behavioral dyscontrol issues. Establish a realistic and workable reading tutoring program.   |  |  |  |
|  | In-school suspension room- in-school suspension room teacher to continue to conduct problem solving and conflict resolution skills training to all students who are referred.  |  |  |  |



Exhibit B.21 - Core Team Minutes

|  |  |                |  |  |
|--|--|----------------|--|--|
| Core Team<br>roles and<br>responsibilities | Academic modifications- per case, Core team and student's individualized Action Team to also look carefully at academic instruction modifications (cooperative learning, peer tutoring, buddy system, etc.) to assist student to learn and to reduce behavioral problems.  |                |  |  |
|  | Establish brief, student specific Action Teams which are small teams that conduct functional behavior analysis and create emotional and behavioral intervention plan for a specific child. Team will need to be coached on how to conduct a functional behavior analysis and write a behavioral plan that is simple, measurable, applicable, realistic and time-framed (SMART).  |                |  |  |
|  | Outcomes assessment: Core Team will, with consultant, develop outcomes assessment data (e.g., staff surveys, office referral data, suspensions, frequent flyers, etc.) to assess outcomes at project completion in June. Data to be used for decisionmaking.   |                |  |  |
| Consultant<br>responsibilities             | Individualized Functional Behavioral Analysis and treatment plan writing: Consultant will: a) conduct functional behavioral analysis on identified students; b) develop written plan for staff and parent; c) coach staff on implementation; d) follow-up systematically and periodically; e) collect data on systematic basis, and; f) refine plan as student needs change and as behavior is modified. Consultant will also coach all staff involved with each identified student. | <i>initial</i> |  |  |

*Note: Approach will be 2 pronged: a) Core Team will address systemic change, and; b) consultant will focus on conducting functional behavioral analysis, writing emotional and behavioral support plans, coaching staff, monitoring plan implementation, assessing progress via data and refining plan as needed. Systemic change issues can be addressed in a strategic planning meeting, which will establish the "how to's" for accomplishing the overall goals for the school. Please keep in mind that real change (i.e., sustained change) will begin to occur in a measurable way between years 2-3 of this plan. Early interventions may produce some behavioral spikes that can be managed and eventually decreased below baseline if the overall plan is followed >95% of the time. Spikes can become entrenched if not managed early or if managed inconsistently.*

(69556)



**~~XXXXXX~~ ELEMENTARY BEHAVIOR PLAN  
EXPECTED BEHAVIORS**

**AM/PM ARRIVAL DISMISSAL**

- ❖ Walk quietly and orderly to and from classrooms.
- ❖ Ask permission to use the restrooms.

**HALL/BUILDING**

- ❖ Walk quietly and orderly throughout the halls.

**CLASSROOMS**

- ❖ Show respect for people and property.
- ❖ Come to class prepared.
- ❖ Pay attention and do your best.

**RESTROOMS**

- ❖ Use sign out sheet for individual use. Use monitors for class use.
- ❖ Use restrooms quietly and quickly.
- ❖ Avoid excessive or unnecessary loud noise.
- ❖ Politely wait in line, if necessary – no pushing or skipping ahead.
- ❖ Use toilet paper and towels sensibly.
- ❖ Flush toilets and dispose of towels and other hygiene products sensibly.

**PLAYGROUND**

- ❖ Stand quietly as line is forming to enter building.
- ❖ Walk quietly and orderly to and from playground.
- ❖ Play in a polite manner – no pushing, pulling or knocking others to the ground.
- ❖ Respect other's belongings – do not take, tug or toss others' toys or articles of clothing, such as hats or jackets.
- ❖ Objects such as stones, pinecones, grass or snow may not be thrown.
- ❖ Use polite language – no name calling or teasing.

**CAFETERIA**

- ❖ While waiting to be served, students will stand in an orderly fashion.
- ❖ Students should be encouraged to bring all necessary items and monies. It should not be necessary to return to classrooms.
- ❖ Voices should be kept at a conversational level.
- ❖ Students will use proper table manners.
- ❖ Sharing or playing with food is not permitted.
- ❖ Students are responsible for cleaning up their own area (table and floor).
- ❖ Students should remain in their seats. Hands should be raised for assistance or permission to leave seats for any reason.

**GROUP ASSEMBLY**

- ❖ Walk quietly and orderly to and from assembly.
- ❖ Be a courteous audience for those presenting.
- ❖ Leave all personal belongings in the classrooms.
- ❖ Keep your hands to yourself.
- ❖ Stay seated until teachers give directions to leave.

**“100 Stars”**  
**for students who make good decisions**  
**Positive Building Behavior Plan**

1. Comes to school on time.
2. Walks correctly through hallways.
3. Uses restrooms appropriately.
4. Respects classmates.
5. Respects teachers.
6. Participates in learning activities with best effort.
7. Exhibits good cafeteria manners.
8. Exhibits good playtime manners.

Homeroom teachers will maintain record for their students.

Any student not making sound behavioral decisions will receive a decision point along with a firm, kind and clear discussion of behavior and ways to improve.

Reading teachers, special area teachers and special area teachers will notify homeroom teachers of any decision points.

Office referrals should not receive decision points unless assigned by Mrs. Amato.

All students grades 1, 2, 3 who receive nine or less decision points during the nine week period will have an in-school reward. All students grades 4, 5 and 6 with less than nine decision points will receive an out of school reward.

Any student with one out-of school suspension or two in-school suspensions cannot participate in the reward.

Any student with no decision points for the nine-weeks will go out to lunch with Mrs. Amato in addition to going to the reward activity.





# School Problem Solving Worksheet

*Teacher/counselor, make sure student answers every question in detail and has responded candidly. Interview them following completion of worksheet to assist them to develop self accountability.*

1) Describe what happened (give answers in detail).

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2) What did you do to make the situation better or worse?

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3) If it made the situation worse, describe why you think so.

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4) Was your behavior the solution to the problem for everyone? Yes\_\_\_ no\_\_\_ How did your behavior create problems for others (describe in detail)

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5) If you could go back and solve the problem in a way that did not hurt you or anyone else, what exactly would you do differently? Give 2 better solutions than the one you used.

1) 

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2) 

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6) Can you follow the solutions you came up with? What would keep you from following them?

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7) Who or what is responsible for your behavior? Who is in charge of how you act?

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***The Keys to Success:***

***Understanding  
Student Misbehavior***

Governor's Academy for Urban Education  
June, 2004

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***Vision for Student Success***

★ Every student will live a satisfying life and meet life's challenges by:

- *Achieving personal goals*
- *Fulfilling responsibilities*
- *Enjoying good health*
- *Producing high quality work*
- *Contributing to his/her community*

Compliments of CASEL

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***Challenges Facing Our Students***

- ★ Economic and social pressures
- ★ Alterations in family composition and stability
- ★ Breakdown of neighborhoods and extended families
- ★ Weakening of community institutions
- ★ Less contact between young people and parents
- ★ On-going exposure to media that encourages health damaging behavior
- ★ Social - emotional-behavioral concerns



Compliments of CASEL

3

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### *A Look At Our Students*

- \*Our children lead complex lives
- \*They are doing the best they can with the tools that they have
- \*It is our job to give them additional tools



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### *Meeting our Students' Needs: Seven Developmental Tenets*

- \*Safety/Structure
- \*Relationships
- \*Belonging
- \*Self-Worth
- \*Independence
- \*Competence/Mastery
- \*Self-Awareness/Control



(Youth Development Model)

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### *Understanding Student Misbehavior*

- \*Why do children misbehave?
- \*To meet basic needs the best way they can
- \*What is our job?
- \*To give students additional tools

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*Reflection on Current Practice:*

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*Punishment*

*Versus*

*Discipline*

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Classroom - sent to office  
ISS - OSS

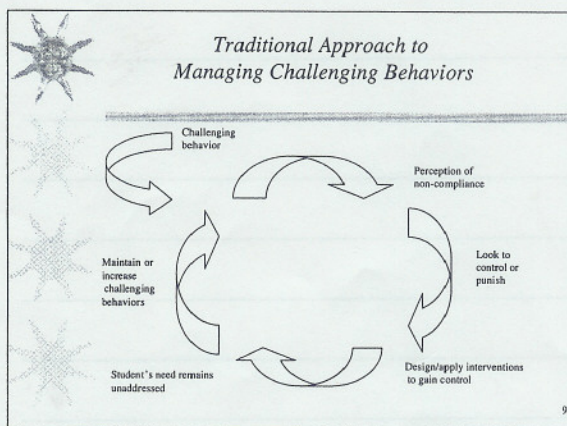


*Punishment*


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- Passive experience
- Demands no student participation
- Does not require student to reflect on consequences of actions
- Engenders anger/resentment
- Teaches no new skills
- Typically isolates student further

8







### *Discipline*

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*\* Discipline: Holds Student Accountable Through Active Engagement*

- Relational model
- Helps student examine choices and impact on others
- Promotes learning and mastery through providing a combination of control and support

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### *Restorative Justice*

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*Confronts and disapproves of wrongdoing while supporting and valuing the intrinsic worth of the student who committed the wrong*

*(Wachtel)*

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### *Restorative Practices*

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*\* Any response to wrongdoing that is:*

- both supportive and limit-setting
- respects the student by assuming that he/she may not be aware of the impact of the misbehavior on others

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### Restorative Practices

\* Any response to wrongdoing that:

- assists the student in identifying the impact of misbehavior on others
- allows student to reintegrate into the community by allowing an opportunity to address the wrongdoing with those affected by it

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### Restorative Justice

|  |                   |                     |
|--|-------------------|---------------------|
| High<br>↑<br>c<br>o<br>n<br>t<br>r<br>o<br>l<br>↑<br>Low | TO<br>Punitive    | WITH<br>Restorative |
|  | Neglectful<br>NOT | Permissive<br>FOR   |

Low → support → High  
(Adapted from Safer/Saner Schools)

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### Restorative Practices: Informal and Formal interventions

\* Informal Interventions:

- Affective Statements/Questions

"I like the way you helped Gretchen out. I bet you made her feel better."

"I was disappointed when you gave Ray a hard time today."

"How do you think Jasmine felt when you did that?"

"What do you think you could do to make her feel better?"

"How do you think the class felt when you did that?"

"What could you do to make things better?"

15

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### *Restorative Practices: Formal Interventions*

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- \* Small Impromptu Conference
- \* Large Group Reintegration
- \* Formal Conference

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### *Restorative Practices*

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\* Effective Restorative Practices:

1. Foster Awareness
2. Avoid Scolding or Lecturing
3. Actively Involve Students
4. Accept Ambiguity
5. Separate the Deed from the Doer
6. See Every Instance of Wrongdoing as an Opportunity for Learning

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### *Positive Behavior Support*

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\* Positive behavior planning is a process by which adults support students in meeting needs in alternative ways which:

- Promote growth
- Improve control
- Increase connectedness
- Teach new skills



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I am Sorry

Exhibit B.26 - Note From Student

Amato

From: ~~Amato~~

Dear Miss Amato I am so sorry for  
thasing snow Ball at people when  
you sad not to throw snow Ball out side  
I did not went to you I am so sorry Miss  
Amato. I will not do That A ging. and when  
I go Bake outside I am not throw snow Ball  
at people.



## Grade 1

September = 2

October = 1

Total = 3

~~Don~~ -~~Yon~~ - 1~~Har~~ -~~Yon~~ -

## Grade 2

September = 7

October = 7

Total = 14

~~Fran~~ - 1~~Fran~~ - 3~~Ban~~ - 0~~Zan~~ - 6~~San~~ - 2~~Can~~ - 1

## Grade 3

September = 12

October = 23

Total = 35

Mr. ~~Can~~ = 2Ms. ~~Zan~~ = 3M ~~Anthony~~ = 11T ~~Anthony~~ = 0Mr. ~~St~~ = 2Ms. ~~Can~~Mrs. ~~Wink~~ = 3

2

Ms. ~~Furner~~ = 2Mr. ~~Wink~~ = 5Ms. ~~Wink~~ = 3Ms. ~~Zan~~ = 2



Grade 5 =

September = 8  
 October = 36  
 total = 44

Teachers:

~~P. [unclear]~~ = 0  
~~P. [unclear]~~ = 9  
~~C. [unclear]~~ = 16  
~~B. [unclear]~~ = 4  
~~W. [unclear]~~ = 2  
~~C. [unclear]~~ = 4  
~~Z. [unclear]~~ = 1  
~~B. [unclear]~~ = 1  
~~J. [unclear]~~ = 2  
~~S. [unclear]~~ = 1

Grade 6

September = 15  
 October = 34  
 total = 49

~~Y. [unclear]~~ = 1  
~~P. [unclear]~~ = 4  
~~S. [unclear]~~ = 6  
~~H. [unclear]~~ =  
~~B. [unclear]~~ = 7  
~~C. [unclear]~~ = 3  
~~G. [unclear]~~ = 9  
~~C. [unclear]~~ = 4  
~~J. [unclear]~~ =  
~~W. [unclear]~~ = 3  
~~B. [unclear]~~ = 1  
~~A. [unclear]~~ = 2

# Disruptive Behavior Disorders Rating Scale: Teacher Form IV

Child's name: Wanda Form completed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 5-17-04 Approximately how many hours per week are you with this child in school? \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions: Circle the number that best describes this child's behavior in the past 3 months.**

|  | Never/<br>rarely | Some-<br>times | Often | Very<br>often |
|--|------------------|----------------|-------|---------------|
| 1 Fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork                  | 0                | 1              | 2     | (3)           |
| 2 Has difficulty focusing and maintaining attention in tasks or activities.                          | 0                | 1              | 2     | (3)           |
| 3 Does not seem to listen when spoken to directly  | 0                | 1              | (2)   | 3             |
| 4 Does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish work.                                  | 0                | 1              | (2)   | 3             |
| 5 Has difficulty organizing tasks and activities.  | 0                | 1              | (2)   | 3             |
| 6 Avoids task (school work, home work) that require mental effort.                                   | 0                | 1              | (2)   | 3             |
| 7 Loses things necessary for tasks and activities  | 0                | 1              | (2)   | 3             |
| 8 Is easily distracted   | 0                | 1              | 2     | (3)           |
| 9 Is forgetful in daily activities (requires repeated instructions)                                  | 0                | 1              | 2     | (3)           |
| 10 Fidgets with hands and feet or squirms in seat  | 0                | 1              | 2     | (3)           |
| 11 Leaves seat or area where he is expected to stay  | 0                | 1              | 2     | (3)           |
| 12 Inappropriately runs about or climbs excessively  | 0                | 1              | (2)   | 3             |
| 13 Has difficulty engaging in leisure activities quietly   | 0                | 1              | 2     | (3)           |
| 14 Is on the go or acts as if "driven by a motor"  | 0                | 1              | 2     | (3)           |
| 15 Talks excessively   | 0                | 1              | 2     | (3)           |
| 16 Blurts out answers before question has been completed   | 0                | 1              | 2     | (3)           |
| 17 Has difficulty awaiting turn  | 0                | 1              | 2     | (3)           |
| 18 Loses temper  | 0                | 1              | (2)   | 3             |
| 19 Argues with adults  | 0                | 1              | 2     | (3)           |
| 20 Argues with peers   | 0                | 1              | 2     | (3)           |
| 21 Actively defies or refuses to comply with requests or rules                                       | 0                | (1)            | 2     | 3             |
| 22 Deliberately annoys others  | 0                | 1              | 2     | (3)           |
| 23 Is touchy or easily annoyed by others   | 0                | 1              | 2     | (3)           |
| 24 Is angry and resentful  | 0                | (1)            | 2     | 3             |
| 25 Blames others for his or her mistakes   | 0                | 1              | 2     | (3)           |
| 26 Is spiteful and vindictive  | 0                | (1)            | (2)   | 3             |
| 27 Is physically aggressive (hits, pushes, kicks, strikes, etc.)                                     | 0                | 1              | (2)   | 3             |
| 28 Is verbally aggressive (curses at and threatens peers or adults, name calls, makes insults, etc.) | 0                | (1)            | 2     | 3             |
| 29 Destroys property (writes on desk, throws books, tears up furniture/equipment, etc.)              | 0                | (1)            | 2     | 3             |
| 30 Lies and/or steals (circle one or both if he does either)   | 0                | 1              | (2)   | (3)           |

**What behaviors result in the most severe classroom disruption:**

- 1) 14
- 2) 8
- 3) 2

# Exhibit B.29 - Behavioral Specialist Survey

Teacher,

Please complete brief survey as it relates to the time spent with Dr. [REDACTED]. His role was to develop implementation plans for specific students and to assist teachers in classroom management strategies as they surrounded those students. Please place a check mark by the "quality identifier" for each question.

Thank you for your time.

Ms. Amato

|            |                  |                  | Kelly Customer Satisfaction Survey   |
|------------|------------------|------------------|--|
| not at all | some of the time | most of the time |  |
|            |                  | ✓                | Consultant demonstrated expertise in dealing with severely disruptive students.                            |
|            |                  | ✓                | Consultant demonstrated expertise in classroom management strategies.                                      |
|            |                  | ✓                | Information provided by consultant was helpful.  |
|            |                  | ✓                | Consultant was tactful and diplomatic.   |
|            |                  | ✓                | The consultant was empathic and a skilled listener.  |
|            |                  | ✓                | Consultant challenged me to think about my classroom management strategies and introduced new ideas to me. |
|            |                  | ✓                | Meeting with consultant was an efficient use of my time.   |
|            |                  | ✓                | The school supports continued learning opportunities for staff.  |
| ✓          |                  |                  | Asking for or receiving classroom management assistance was uncomfortable for me.                          |
| ✓          |                  |                  | Change as introduced by consultant, produced anxiety for me.   |
|            |                  | ✓                | I implemented some of the ideas presented by consultant.   |
|            |                  | ✓                | The ideas I implemented had a positive impact on my teaching.  |
|            |                  | ✓                | I learned new intervention strategies from working with consultant.  |
|            |                  | ✓                | Consultant was sensitive to my time constraints and approached me when appropriate or when time permitted. |

What was biggest benefit of consultation for you?

Dr. [REDACTED] always asked if it was a good time to talk. ☺

- 1) I feel Dr. [REDACTED] is very helpful. I enjoyed our
- 2) talks and loved trying his strategies.

In what ways could consultant be more helpful (e.g., practical, realistic, relevant, etc.) to you or more supportive?

- 1) I think you helped me a lot! Dr. [REDACTED]'s strategies
- 2) might take time to implement however, the extra time put forth is worth the outcome.

In what areas could consultation focus that would make teaching/instructional time more effective?

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_

In working with teachers, what would make consultation time more efficient and effective?

- 1) I loved having the plan typed out. I
- 2) was able to work off of the hard copy and go back and refer to it when needed.

Thank you! Have a good summer

[REDACTED]



4-28-04

Ms. ~~Smith~~,

Some observations &amp; thoughts:

- 1) Good lesson plans - challenging & interesting
- 2) Class quieter (20-30%) from 2 weeks ago.
- 3) less unnecessary & disruptive movement between seats (20-30%)
- 4) yelling across room, horseplay and constant talking between students down 30-35%

Keep it up!!!

Things to consider:

- 1) Repeat yourself no more than 2 times
- 2) Consider use of a step-down desk in class. Give students a chance to problem solve in the context where issues surface. Student gets for 5 minutes to "think-about-it." Try to use as a teaching opportunity - avoid having it be used as punishment
- 3) As we discussed - allow them to see the "other side" to balance your approach, connect & have them see you as invested & involved in them.

Thanks for your hospitality & openness. *DB*



**Amato, Eileen**

---

**From:** [REDACTED]@yahoo.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 22, 2004 6:47 AM  
**To:** eamato@[REDACTED]schools.org  
**Subject:** Positive Behavioral Support Proposal 2004-2005

Ms. Amato,

As per our discussion yesterday morning, enclosed is a synopsis of program elements from last years proposal to the [REDACTED] School District. There are some modifications based on the experience in the 8-10 weeks of working in the school last year. The enclosed program elements are in keeping with the arrangement from last year, with the exception of the development of the Positive Behavioral Support Classroom with Ms. [REDACTED], which has been excluded until the teacher's capacity for using the principles coached is sufficient to develop a more global approach.

**Proposed services:**

- 1) **Functional Behavioral Analysis-** Conduct functional behavioral analysis (via assessments, observation, data collection and teacher interviews) of highly disruptive students, and students at risk of removal to more intensive programs such as PACE School, Pressley Ridge, Holy Family Institute, etc. The information gleaned from the analysis is used to establish a workable, positive, school-based behavioral and emotional support plan.
- 2) **Positive Behavioral Support Plans-** Develop specific, teacher friendly, practical, and realistic behavioral/mental health intervention plans (especially for students eligible for section 504 or those with an IEP due to having a severe emotional disturbance) for students whose behavior interferes with instruction on a consistent basis.
- 3) **Coach/train** specific teachers on the use of Positive Behavioral Support with identified students with written Behavioral Support Plans. Also coach teachers on classroom management strategies designed to prevent student disruptions and increase student participation and learning of both academic material and pro-social skills.
- 4) **Psycho-educational Coaching:** Give two to four 1-3 hour school-wide presentations on classroom management strategies, severe disruptive behavior disorders (signs and symptoms, diagnosis, medications and medication effects on cognition and learning, strategies for working with specific children), behavioral principles, etc.

**Summary of April-June 2004 experience:**

The initial decision was made to develop a *Core Team* of staff who would, over time, become proficient in the program's design, implementation and review. The Core Team's first act was to identify 10 students requiring intensive emotional and behavioral support planning, thereafter, it was responsible for looking within the school for school-wide strategies (e.g., develop consistency throughout the school, manage common area disruptions that spilled over into class, redesign student movement between classes and from lunch to classes in a way that decreased confusion and chaos, develop methods for stabilizing

9/27/2004



## Exhibit B. 31 - Behavioral Specialist Proposal

teacher's response to behavioral problems in order to improve consistency from class to class, etc.). The Core Team would eventually (in year two of the full year's program) also become the trainers of all staff in the principles of Positive Behavioral and Emotional Support Planning and oversee the entire program's implementation from year to year, which would develop the school's overall capacity for providing these services without the need for consulting services.

>95% of the consultant's time was spent in:

- Interviewing teachers on specific behaviors on identified students (15-20% of time)
- Collecting functional behavioral assessment data (15-20% of time)
- Writing of individualized, positive emotional and behavioral support plans (10-15% of time)
- Coaching teachers on specific interventions and classroom management strategies (50-60% of time)
- Meeting with parents to introduce them to Positive Behavioral Support process in school and to garner their support for the process (<5% of time)

**Outcome measures:**

- Reduction in office referrals for identified students by 30-50% following 4 months of intervention for each child (from start of plan once parent has signed off on it).
- 25-30% reduction in problem behavior of identified students as assessed by the Disruptive Behavior Disorders Rating Scale: Teacher Form: *Version IV*, using baseline and follow-up monthly measures, following 4 months of intervention for each child (following start of plan once parent has signed off on it).

A reduction in office referrals and increase in cooperative behavior is expected to translate into increased academic exposure for the identified students and increased instructional time for teachers.

**Fiscal:** Contract on an hourly basis at the rate of \$70 per hour. Given last year's experience, and especially the brief time allotted for accomplishing the objectives, a minimally realistic number of hours would be 12-16 per week when spread over a 6-7 month period (with referrals of 20-25 children). The school will pay monthly invoices within 30 days of receipt.

Should you have any questions or comments, we can review in our lunch meeting Friday. Also, should the school have concerns surrounding the unfounded rumors about my apparent interest in writing a book about the school (which would be highly unethical given our arrangement), a clause in the contract could be included to this effect. I want to be clear that the full scope and intent of my work with the District is entirely contained within this agreement/proposal and that there are no additional plans or thoughts as related to this work.

I look forward to seeing you and ~~the school principal~~ on Friday. Thank you again for everything.

~~Don~~

---

Do you Yahoo!?

Express yourself with Y! Messenger! Free. [Download now.](#)

9/27/2004

## Elementary Student Discipline Guidelines

- Use referral form for infractions on referral sheet only. Other infractions should be handled at the classroom level. Repeated behavior should be referred to Child Study Team.
- Write one referral for each student involved in the incident.

- **Completely** fill in :

- ✓ First and last name
- ✓ Grade
- ✓ Homeroom
- ✓ Date of incident
- ✓ Place incident occurred
- ✓ Student infraction
- ✓ Please describe incident- details, facts, not opinions
- ✓ Adult witnesses
- ✓ Student witnesses
- ✓ Referring teacher's signature
- ✓ Date
- ✓ Parent notification line



- When parent is contacted, give details and explain that referral has been sent to office. Do not tell parent the consequence unless you've spoken to a principal first. Parent contact must be made before referral will be processed.
- Send referral, **not** student to the office. When a principal becomes available, situation will be investigated. If any of the students or adults are absent, the investigation *may* need to wait.
- Children may be assigned ISS or OSS at varying times throughout the day. When notified by the office, gather work and send to office or ISS as soon as possible.
- Consequences are administrative decisions. Every referral will be investigated but will not necessarily warrant an ISS or OSS. Consequences will be assigned based on the severity of the incident, frequency of behavior, student's disability (if applicable), and consideration of what would be an appropriate learning situation for the child. Principals will make the final call. Teachers will receive a tear-off slip in their box after the consequence has been assigned. Please respect the decision of the office when a consequence is assigned. At any time, a teacher may request a conference to discuss a decision. Keep in mind that when displeasure with a consequence is aired inappropriately with parents,

students or other teachers we are not modeling for students an appropriate way to handle decisions we don't agree with.

In the event a child becomes physical—ex. fighting, throwing chairs, threatening to harm an adult

- call the office **immediately** to request security
- briefly describe the situation and name the child
- contact adults in your immediate area for assistance
- once child has been removed and class is settled, send referral

Security is for serious aggression. Do not call security for the following :

- ✓ child not in seat
- ✓ child refusing to do work
- ✓ child tapping pencils/books
- ✓ child walking around room
- ✓ child talking back
- ✓ child still in coatroom

**When principals are out of the building, the procedure remains the same. Call for security for aggressive situations. Send referral for all other situations.** The office team, headed by Ms. [REDACTED] will handle situations until principals return. **Consequences will be assigned for major incidents only.** All other incidents will be assigned when the principals return.

Lunch and recess detention is for lunch/recess infractions or office referrals only. Teachers may hold children with them during the lunch hour, if they choose.

A few reminders:

- Do not send a student to get security
- Do not send students directly to Ms. [REDACTED]
- Do not let a disciplinary situation occur because you are not well planned, consistent or directly supervising the learning environment

Ms. Amato's Law: "When you build a structured positive learning environment, student misbehavior minimizes."

Ms. [REDACTED]'s Law: "Children who know they are in a positive learning community engage in the lessons of the day."

Ms. [REDACTED]'s Law: "If you don't have a plan for children, they have a plan for you."



## September 2003

October 2003

|   | S  | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  | S  | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1 | 7  | 6  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 2 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 3 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |    |    |    | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  |

|             | Monday         | Tuesday                | Wednesday              | Thursday              | Friday                | Sat/Sun  |
|-------------|----------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------|
| September 1 |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 2           |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 3           |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 4           |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 5           |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 6           |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 7           |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 8           | 5 OSS<br>1 SC  | 3 OSS<br>3 ISS<br>2 SC | 3 OSS<br>3 ISS<br>4 SC | 400 ISS<br>3 SC       | 1055<br>3 ISS<br>7 SC | 3 total  |
| 9           |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 10          |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 11          |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 12          |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 13          |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 14          |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 15          | 2 OSS<br>6 ISS | 2 OSS<br>5 ISS<br>2 SC | 1 OSS<br>4 ISS<br>4 SC | 1055<br>5 ISS<br>3 SC | 3055<br>4 ISS<br>4 SC | 46 total |
| 16          |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 17          |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 18          |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 19          |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 20          |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 21          |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 22          | 1 OSS<br>4 SC  | 1 OSS<br>5 ISS         | 3055<br>440<br>5 SC    | 3055<br>4 ISS<br>1 SC | 3055<br>3 ISS<br>2 SC | 41 total |
| 23          |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 24          |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 25          |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 26          |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 27          |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 28          |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 29          | 3055<br>4 SC   | 1055<br>3 ISS          |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 30          |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |
| 31          |                |                        |                        |                       |                       |          |

Unknown

1

9/14/2003 4:29 PM

152 total revals

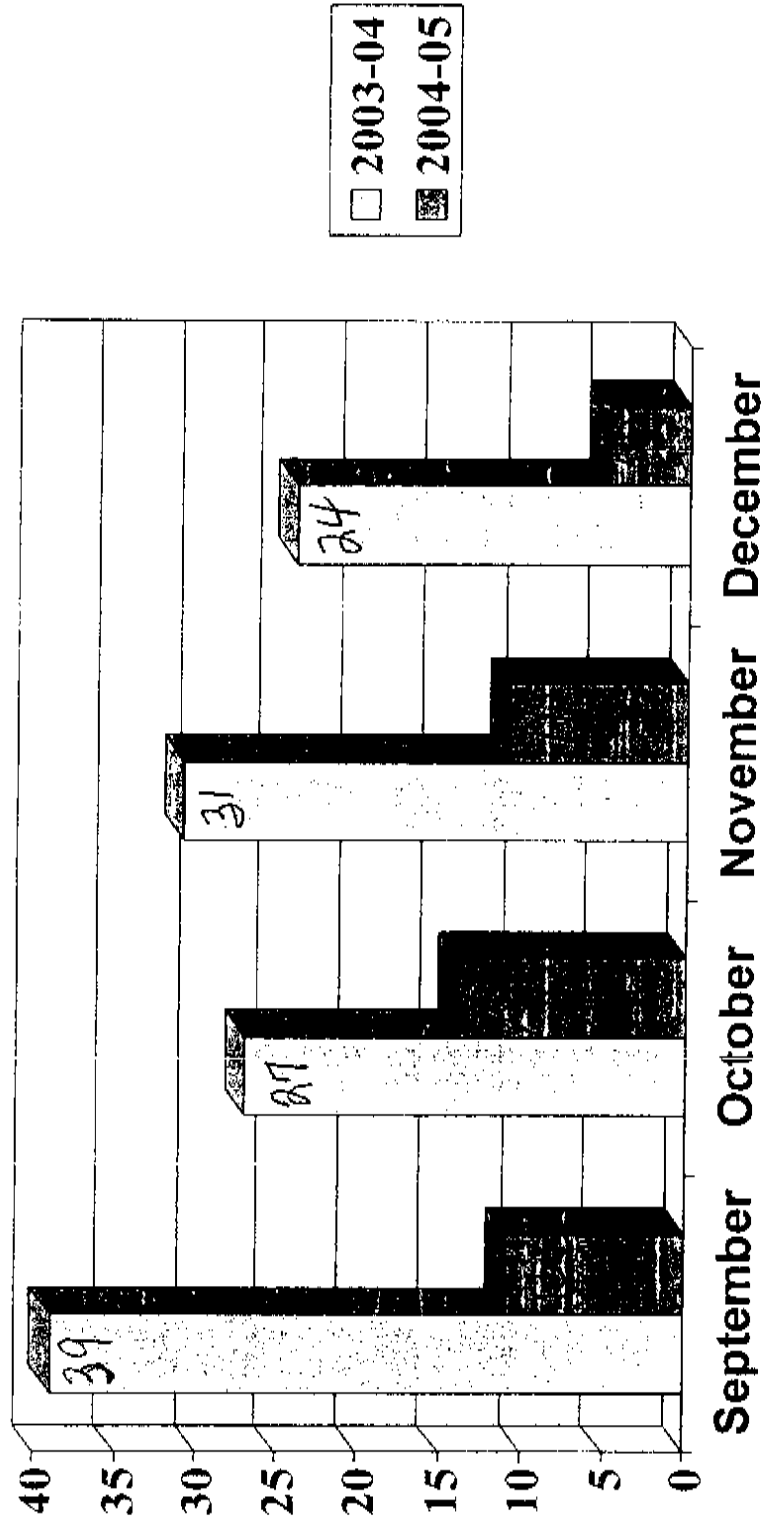
## October 2004

| S  | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 |
| 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |    |    |

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pen

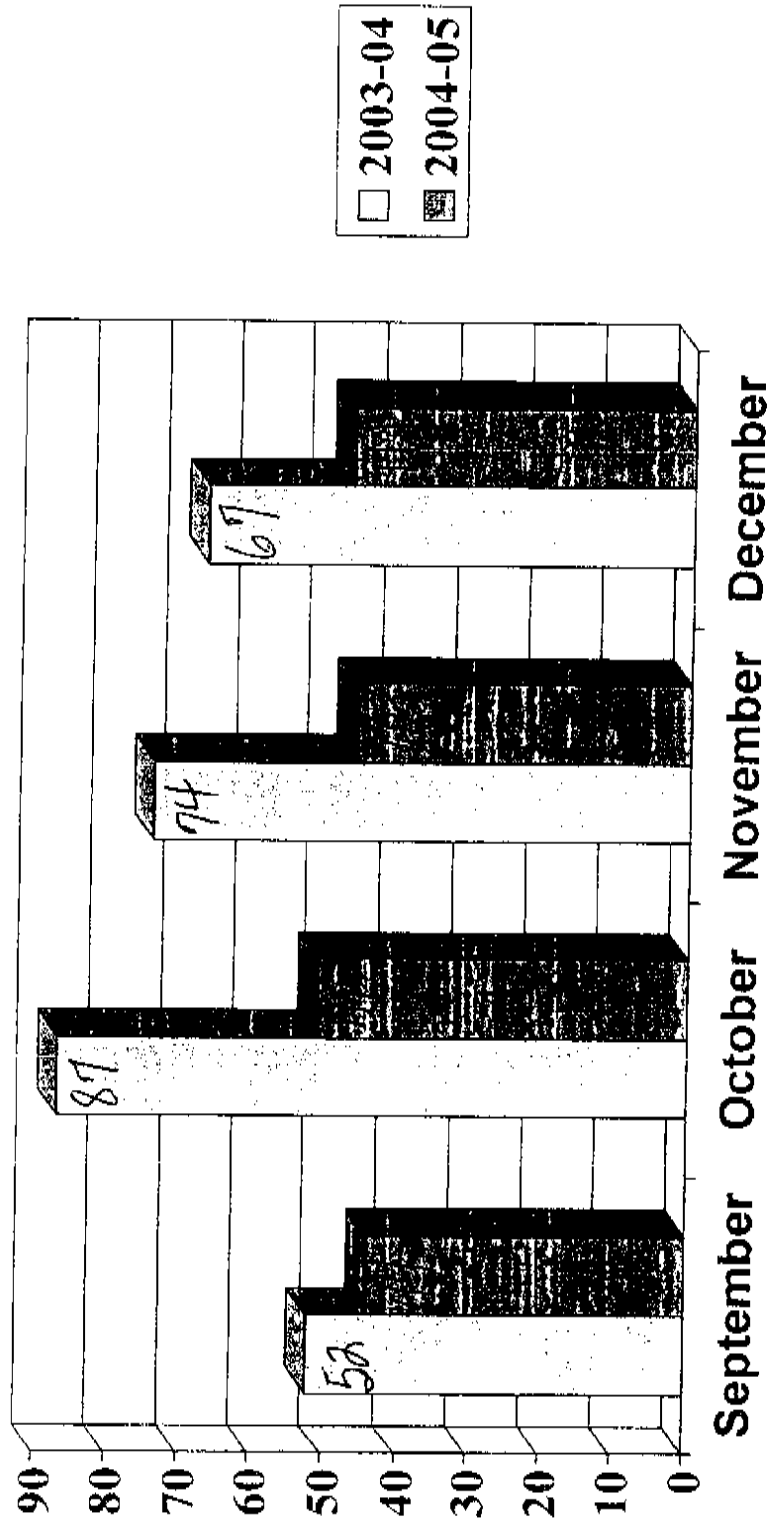
Out of School Suspensions  
2003-04  
2004-05



# Inschool Suspensions

2003-04

2004-05





2004-2005 ~~Wash~~ School District  
Detentions/Suspensions Report from 10/01/0004 To 10/30/5200  
~~Wash~~ ELEMENTARY

Exhibit B. 35 - Discipline Data

| Student # | Student Name | Sch# | Grd | Hr   | Phone #    | Date(s) / Served | Codes/Descriptions                        |
|-----------|--------------|------|-----|------|------------|------------------|---|
| 110199    | [REDACTED]   | 003  | 6   | 038A | [REDACTED] | 10/21/2004 Yes   | 008-173 FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION         |
| 110441    | [REDACTED]   | 003  | 4   | 0429 | [REDACTED] | 10/25/2004 Yes   | 008-173 FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION         |
| 110581    | [REDACTED]   | 003  | 6   | 038A | [REDACTED] | 10/25/2004 Yes   | 008-173 FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION         |
| 120376    | [REDACTED]   | 003  | 3   | 0024 | [REDACTED] | 10/28/2004 Yes   | 008-173 FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION         |
| 120232    | [REDACTED]   | 003  | 5   | 0028 | [REDACTED] | 09/08/2004 No    | 008-173 FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION         |
| 120229    | [REDACTED]   | 003  | 4   | 0021 | [REDACTED] | 09/28/2004 Yes   | 008-173 FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION         |
| 120384    | [REDACTED]   | 003  | 2   | 0010 | [REDACTED] | 09/08/2004 No    | 008-173 FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION         |
| 120199    | [REDACTED]   | 003  | 6   | 038A | [REDACTED] | 09/08/2004 No    | 008-173 FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION         |
| 140097    | [REDACTED]   | 003  | 2   | 0010 | [REDACTED] | 10/28/2004 Yes   | 008-173 FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION         |
| 110605    | [REDACTED]   | 003  | 6   | 038A | [REDACTED] | 10/29/2004 Yes   | 008-173 FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION         |
| 110142    | [REDACTED]   | 003  | 6   | 038B | [REDACTED] | 09/10/2004 No    | 008-173 FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION         |
| 120280    | [REDACTED]   | 003  | 5   | 0028 | [REDACTED] | 09/13/2004 No    | 008-173 FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION         |
| 090108    | [REDACTED]   | 003  | 5   | 0026 | [REDACTED] | 10/01/2004 Yes   | 008-173 FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION         |
| 120937    | [REDACTED]   | 003  | 5   | 0028 | [REDACTED] | 10/29/2004 Yes   | 008-173 FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION         |
| 120352    | [REDACTED]   | 003  | 5   | 0028 | [REDACTED] | 09/29/2004 Yes   | 008-173 FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION         |
| 110665    | [REDACTED]   | 003  | 6   | 038B | [REDACTED] | 09/03/2004 No    | 008-173 FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION         |
| 100196    | [REDACTED]   | 003  | 5   | 0027 | [REDACTED] | 09/24/2004 No    | 008-173 FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION         |
| 110126    | [REDACTED]   | 003  | 6   | 038A | [REDACTED] | 09/29/2004 Yes   | 008-173 FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION         |
| 120058    | [REDACTED]   | 003  | 3   | 0023 | [REDACTED] | 09/10/2004 No    | 008-173 FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION         |
| 900101    | [REDACTED]   | 003  | 5   | 0027 | [REDACTED] | 09/13/2004 No    | 008-173 FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION         |
| 130587    | [REDACTED]   | 003  | 4   | 0021 | [REDACTED] | 09/20/2004 No    | 008-173 FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION         |
|           | [REDACTED]   | 003  | 5   | 0027 | [REDACTED] | 10/22/2004 Yes   | 007-173 PHYSICAL ASSAULT 1 DAY SUSPENSION |
|           | [REDACTED]   | 003  | 4   | 0021 | [REDACTED] | 10/29/2004 Yes   | 008-173 FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION         |
|           | [REDACTED]   | 003  | 4   | 0021 | [REDACTED] | 10/22/2004 Yes   | 008-173 FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION         |
|           | [REDACTED]   | 003  | 4   | 0021 | [REDACTED] | 10/25/2004 Yes   | 008-173 FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION         |

2004-2005 School District  
Defentions/Suspensions Report from 11/01/2004 To 11/30/2004  
ELEMENARY

| Student # | Student Name   | Sch# | Grd | Hr   | Date(s) Served | Codes/Descriptions   |
|-----------|----------------|------|-----|------|----------------|--|
| 149189    | VALERIE TAYLOR | 003  | 4   | 0023 | 11/12/2004 Yes | (73-051) CONSISTENT VIOLATION OF SCHOOL RULES 1 DAY SUSPENSION |
| 149041    | SONDRIK RIVER  | 003  | 3   | 0023 | 11/02/2004 Yes | (08-051) FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION                             |
| 012126    | BRADLEY TAYLOR | 003  | 4   | 0021 | 11/04/2004 Yes | (08-051) FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION                             |
| 130076    | LEONARD TAYLOR | 003  | 4   | 0021 | 11/02/2004 Yes | (08-051) FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION                             |
| 100233    | MAURICE TAYLOR | 003  | 5   | 0028 | 11/02/2004 Yes | (08-051) FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION                             |
| 140181    | MAURICE TAYLOR | 003  | 6   | 0058 | 11/19/2004 Yes | (08-053) FIGHTING 3 DAYS SUSPENSION                            |
|           |                |      |     |      | 11/22/2004 Yes |  |
|           |                |      |     |      | 11/23/2004 Yes |  |
|           |                |      |     |      | 11/24/2004 Yes | (73-051) CONSISTENT VIOLATION OF SCHOOL RULES 1 DAY SUSPENSION |

2004-2005 ~~XXXX~~ School District  
Detentions/Suspensions Report from 12/01/2004 To 12/22/2004  
~~XXXXXX~~ ELEMENTARY

| Student # | Student Name                    | Sec# | Grd | Hr   | Date(s) Served | Code(s) Description                      |
|-----------|---------------------------------|------|-----|------|----------------|--|
| 130004    | <del>XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX</del> | 003  | 4   | 0020 | 12-13-2004 Yes | 008 051 FIGHTING 1 DAY SUSPENSION        |
| 130136    | <del>XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX</del> | 003  | 5   | 0026 | 12-13-2004 Yes | 008 053 FIGHTING 3 DAYS SUSPENSION       |
|           |                                 |      |     |      | 12-14-2004 Yes |  |
|           |                                 |      |     |      | 12-15-2004 Yes |  |
| 140210    | <del>XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX</del> | 003  | 5   | 0027 | 12-13-2004 Yes | 015 051 INSUBORDINATION 1 DAY SUSPENSION |

## Student Council - January Activities

- \* On Friday, January 7th and Friday, January 28th, we will sell brownies after school to raise money.
- \* On Wednesday, January 12th, we will meet at 3:00 to bake cookies and make pillows for the Mulberry Center.
- \* Friday, January 14th will be Mismatch Day at ~~King~~ School.
- \* On Wednesday, January 19th, we will meet at 3:00 to make banners and decorations for the pep rally.
- \* On Thursday, January 20th the pep rally will start at 1:30. This will also be green and white day.
- \* On Wednesday, January 26th, we will do winter activities and snacks with Kindergarten at 1:30.

## Raffles

- \* Super Sled Raffle ( Students Council members will collect money and one name will be pulled to win a sled for winter!)
- \* Winter Warm-up Raffle (On parent/teacher conference day, parents will be able to purchase a raffle to win a package with soup, hot chocolate, and more!)

# Elementary School January 2004-2005

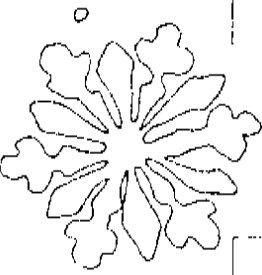
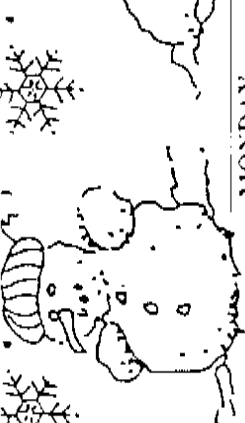
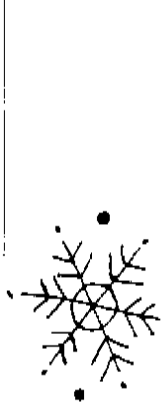
MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY



3

6<sup>th</sup> grade candy sale all month

Win a crouching tiger... free tickets at breakfast only!  
1<sup>st</sup> grade Junie B. Jones Heinz Hall-12: 15 pm

NO School for Staff & Students  
MLK Birthday- observed

No school for students- Staff Development

When Love & Skill work together, expect a masterpiece

This Month- Super Sled Raffle Warm-Up Raffle Crouching Tiger Raffle

4

\$ .75 sucker sale all month at lunch  
Help support our Basketball Players/Cheerleaders!

RIF Distribution  
6<sup>th</sup> grade- Paul Evans/River City-8 am

Win a crouching tiger... free tickets at breakfast only!  
Go Tigers!!!

\$ .75 sucker sale all month at lunch  
Help support our Basketball Players/Cheerleaders!

5

Win a crouching tiger... free tickets at breakfast only!  
Go Tigers!!!

Student Council Meeting @ 3 pm room 25  
Win a crouching tiger... free tickets at breakfast only!

4<sup>th</sup> Grade-Pgh Symphony Heinz Hall-10: 30  
Student Council Meeting @ 3 pm room 25  
6<sup>th</sup> grade candy sale all month

Student Council Winter Activities With kindergarten 1:30

6

Turner vs. Kelly @ 4 pm  
Basketball/Cheerleader Bake Sale at lunch

Basketball/Cheerleader Bake Sale at lunch  
Please send donations to rm. 25  
Thank you!

Green & White Day  
Basketball pep rally @ 1:30  
Kelly vs. Johnston 4 pm  
End of second grading period. Report cards will be mailed in 5 days

Kelly vs. Turner-4 pm  
Go Tigers!!!

7

6<sup>th</sup> Grade-Pgh Symphony Heinz Hall-10: 30  
Movie Night 6pm-8 pm  
\*Refreshments will be sold  
students only!

Mismatch Day  
WGFD Storyteller 1-2:30

No school for students- Clerical Day

Starz K-3 Magician 1 pm  
Student Council Brownie Sale after school

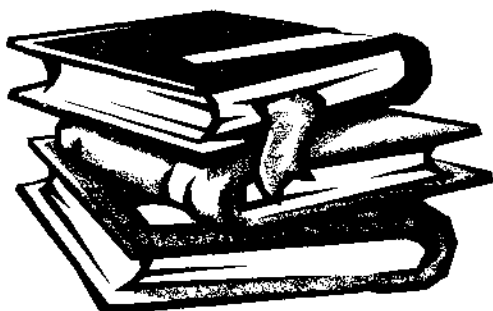
14

Win a crouching tiger... free tickets at breakfast only!  
Help support our Basketball Players/Cheerleaders!

\$ .75 sucker sale all month at lunch  
Help support our Basketball Players/Cheerleaders!

6<sup>th</sup> grade candy sale all month

[illegible]



## Parental Involvement Policy for ~~Johnston~~ Elementary School

The staff at ~~Johnston~~ Elementary School believes that academic achievement is the shared responsibility of the entire school community. Parental involvement is a critical dimension of effective schooling. In order to promote parental involvement, each group will have the following goals and responsibilities in the education of Johnston students:

### *Teacher Goals and Responsibilities*

- Provide a high quality curriculum and rigorous instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment enabling students to meet the state standards
- Use assessment to determine student progress
- Report progress in a timely fashion to parents
- Provide assistance to parents, as appropriate, in understanding how to monitor their child's academic progress and how to work with the school staff to improve the achievement of the student
- Provide materials and resources that parents can use with students particularly in the area of literacy

### *Administration Goals and Responsibilities*

- Inform parents regarding the academic curriculum, student proficiency levels and assessments used to measure student progress
- Model and encourage teachers to reach out to, communicate with and work with teachers as equal partners
- Build ties between the parents and the school
- Provide timely responses to parent suggestions and questions

- Provide meetings, conferences and celebrations that promote student learning
- Address barriers to parent participation such as hours, child care, transportation to meet individual family needs

*Parent Goals and Responsibilities*

- Support learning by monitoring attendance
- Communicate regularly with school staff
- Participate in decisions regarding their child's education
- Participate in school activities
- Be aware of and follow the rules and regulations of the school

Parent Involvement Activities at [REDACTED] School include the following:

- Curricular meetings  
Grade level meetings—ex. PSSA dinner, literacy nights  
Parent/teacher conferences  
Report card meetings  
Child Study meetings
- Parent's Organization  
Regular monthly meetings
- Volunteering  
Santa's workshop  
Book fair  
Field trips  
Guest Readers
- Celebrations  
Art Show  
Classroom programs  
Back-to-School Picnic  
Fun Fair
- Employment  
Century 21



# BLACK HISTORY CELEBRATION



**COME JOIN US IN A  
CELEBRATION OF BLACK  
HERITAGE!**

**\*\*HOSTED BY THE SIXTH GRADE\*  
WHERE: ~~WILSON~~ ELEMENTARY  
SCHOOL**

**~~Principal, Eileen Amato~~  
PRINCIPAL, EILEEN AMATO**

**WHEN: FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 25,  
2005**

**TIME: 6:30 P.M.**

**ADMISSION: \$1.00 ADULTS  
.50 STUDENTS**

~~██████████~~ SCHOOL DISTRICT  
~~██████████~~ ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

~~██████████~~  
~~██████████~~  
~~██████████~~  
~~██████████~~

~~██████████~~  
Superintendent

Mrs. Eileen Amato  
Principal

You are invited to our Holiday Play

## “Who Almost Stole Christmas?”

Where: ~~██████████~~ Elementary School Gym

When: Monday, December 13, 2004 @ 6 pm

What you get: Entertainment & a chance to  
win our Holiday raffle



Cost: \$.50 per adult/ 1 can good or non-  
perishable items per student

Can goods will be distributed into baskets and raffled the next day

Exhibit B.42 - Email

  
-----  
To:  Elementary Staff

Subject: Bake Sale

Hi!!!  School Parent Teacher Group and  Student Council will have a bake sale every Thursday in the Month on November. We are asking for donations of baked goods, snacks, small individual drinks. If you could wrap all your goods individually it would be appreciated.

This years the bake saie table will be set up by door at the start of the lunch line.

The proceeds from this months bake sale will fund Santa's work shop.

Thank you for your support



11/2/2004

~~REDACTED~~

---

From: ~~REDACTED~~  
Sent: Tuesday, November 09, 2004 9:17 AM  
To: ~~REDACTED~~ Elementary Staff  
Subject: Bake sale this Thursday

Thanks for the support with last weeks bake sale!

The Parent Teacher Group and ~~REDACTED~~ Student Council will have another bake sale this Thursday and we are asking for your help again.

Please send drinks, snacks, and individually wrapped bake goods to the office.

Proceeds from the bake sales will go towards Santa's gift shop next month.

Thanks again,

~~REDACTED~~

11/9/2004

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ SCHOOL DISTRICT

~~XXXX~~ Elementary School

~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ PA ~~XXXX~~

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

~~XXXXXX~~

*Mrs. Ellen Amato*  
*Principal*

### PARENT / TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent / Teacher conferences are scheduled on **Tuesday November 2, 2004**. The conference day requires your presence at ~~XXXX~~ School. During this meeting you will receive an update on your child's performance in all curriculum areas. Each teacher who works with your child during the school day will be available to meet with you. Teachers will review your child's progress and discuss plans for the next nine weeks of school. Parents will also receive the report card at this conference.

Please complete and return this bottom portion of this letter to your child's homeroom teacher by Wednesday, **OCTOBER 27, 2004**.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Amato  
Principal

\*\*\*\*\*

Please indicate your choice of conference times. Return this portion to your homeroom teacher.

November 2 between 11:30 am-2:30 pm \_\_\_\_\_

November 2 between 4:30 pm-7:00 pm \_\_\_\_\_

\*\* I have children in the following classrooms and I would like their conferences within the same time block. Room #'s \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

To: Mrs. Amato

3/17/05

From: ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

Re: ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

Mrs. Amato,

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ had a perfect morning. 9/10 Goods! Phoned mom who was elated & screamed! Why can't he do this everyday, she asked? He's so excited!

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~



**Amato, Eileen**

---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 29, 2004 8:27 PM  
**To:** Administration Building; Alternative School; CCF Staff; High School Staff; [REDACTED]  
Elementary Staff; [REDACTED] Elementary Staff; Maintenance/Custodial Department; Middle School  
Staff; PYT Staff; [REDACTED] Elementary Staff  
**Subject:** LIGHTS ON AFTERSCHOOL!!

Again this year we will be hosting a LIGHTS ON AFTERSCHOOL Program. I don't have flyers made up yet, but I wanted to let everyone know that this will be an opportunity to show the community just what we have in our schools. I will have flyers emailed out to the secretaries next week - hopefully they can be copied and distributed to the children for their parents. Also, I will be bringing posters around on Friday or Monday to be hung.

Please provide a table from each of the schools showing off what you do! If anyone has any games that some of the children and youth can play during this time period, please come prepare to play! If you have anything we can use as prizes-we welcome them also.

There will be food, games, music, information and resources, and general meeting and greeting. AND everything is free to everyone!!

A notice will go out to all wilkinsburg agencies/organizations as well as the Boro Council and the Churches.

This is our third attempt at joining in with schools, organizations and churches from around the country in making a statement that afterschool programs are needed in every community. Please join with us. We need everyone's help!

I still have planning to do so if anyone would like to help, please email me or call me X2290.

What: LIGHTS ON AFTERSCHOOL.  
Where: High School Cafeteria  
When: October 14, 2004  
Time: 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

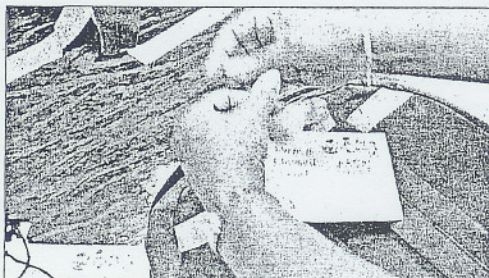


9/2/2004



JASMINE GEHRIS/TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Elementary School sixth-grade girls (above) pick out their backpacks filled with school supplies. At right, a note with wishes for a successful school year is included in the backpacks for struggling students.



SIDNEY L. DAVIS/TRIBUNE-REVIEW

## School spirit's in the bag

*Church raises more than \$8,000 to buy backpacks and fill them with school supplies.*

ING SCHOOLS

BY DAN REYNOLDS  
TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Denise Graves said she was just going with the spiritual flow to make sure that every elementary student in the [redacted] School District has a new backpack.

"I said to God 'If this is your idea then show me the way,'" said Graves, outreach pastor of Covenant Church of Pittsburgh, in [redacted].

When more than 1,045 students in the district's three primary buildings showed up for class Monday, there were multicolored backpacks waiting for every one of them, courtesy of Graves and her fellow church members.

The church raised more than \$8,000 through corporate donations and other fund-raising to buy the backpacks and fill them with school supplies like pens, calculators, pencils and highlighters.

Graves started the program last school year, and raised enough money to purchase about 600 backpacks.

The church members plan to take the program even wider next year. "Next year I have bigger dreams," Graves said. "I feel like we're going to hit this community and go beyond."

She said her chief motivation for the project is the fact that many students in [redacted] live below the poverty line and lack the resources they need to get school supplies.

Graves isn't the only one getting a wake up call. Included in the backpacks were battery-operated alarm clocks to give kids a chance to hit the opening bell for school.

Tardiness is a real problem among students in the district, according to Eileen Amato, principal of the [redacted] Elementary School. She said her school has an awards program for students who make it to school on time, but there are some students who never get a chance to cash in.

"Some students are kept out of that award because they have excessive tardiness," Amato said.

She said students who are repeat of-



JASMINE GEHRIS/TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Brittnea Turner of Covenant Church of Pittsburgh hands out backpacks.

fenders run the risk of ending up in front of the local District Justice Alberta Thompson on truancy charges.

But perhaps even worse, they might miss out on the most important part of the school day.

"We try to have our most significant subjects first thing in the morning while the kids are fresh," Amato said.

While students are graded on attendance, Amato doesn't feel students in kindergarten through sixth grade should have that responsibility.

"It's really parents who should get the grade," Amato said.

Steve Shelton, 44, of Penn Hills, was one of the Covenant Church volunteers who was on hand to give out backpacks at the [redacted] Elementary School on a rainy muggy Monday morning.

"Anytime you can touch a kid's life, you have an impact," said Shelton. "It's what Jesus would do."

[redacted], 11, of [redacted] was wearing a big smile on his face and a brand new gray red and black backpack on his back as he started the fifth grade on Monday morning.

"It's great," beamed [redacted]. "It matches my shirt."



**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 01, 2004 7:32 AM  
**To:** Amato, Eileen  
**Subject:** RE: Kiwanis Christmas Party

I also have thirty kids for the parties sponsored by [REDACTED] I will bring the list over

**From:** Amato, Eileen  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 01, 2004 7:04 AM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** FW: Kiwanis Christmas Party

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 30, 2004 5:03 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]; Amato, Eileen  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Kiwanis Christmas Party

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~  
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~~\_\_\_\_\_~~



JUSTIN MERRIMAN/TRIBUNE-REVIEW

[REDACTED] a music teacher at [REDACTED] Elementary School in [REDACTED], helps fifth grader [REDACTED] in an African drum class to prepare for an upcoming benefit concert to help raise money for instruments for the elementary schools.

# Concert to pay for instruments

*The PSO event seeks to raise funds so kids in [REDACTED] schools can have varied choices.*

BY CHARLES N. BROWN  
TRIBUNE-REVIEW

## Benefit concert

The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra will perform a benefit concert 7 p.m. Friday at [REDACTED] High School to help elementary students in the [REDACTED] School District, which needs money to buy instruments. To donate instruments, contact [REDACTED] at (412) 956-2612, or by email at [REDACTED].

\$17,000 to buy the same instruments for seventh- and eighth-graders.

"This year, we definitely need everything," said district band director [REDACTED]. "We need a balance of instruments."

[REDACTED], an eighth-grader at [REDACTED] Jr./Sr. High School, started learning the clarinet at Lincoln Elementary School in Lincoln-Lemington.

"I was glad when I got my new instrument," he said. "I was sick

of sharing one. I really couldn't take it home to practice."

Seventh-grader [REDACTED], 12, picked up a flute for the first time three weeks ago.

"It's actually fun," [REDACTED] said. "Before, I thought the flute wasn't going to be interesting, but it's a cool instrument. I should've had it in elementary."

In addition to the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, the community concert will include junior high school students playing the instruments purchased with proceeds from last year's concert and elementary students using African drums, cowbells and other instruments.

[REDACTED] previously had an instrumental music program, but instruments weren't replaced over time. Students interested in band begin playing instruments in the seventh grade. With this new fund-raising emphasis, children can start learning in fourth grade.

Officials seek to raise at least \$15,000 for the elementary school program and are counting on the

community to donate some instruments.



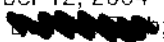





[REDACTED], a [REDACTED] Elementary School music teacher who helps to arrange the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra's performances, said music is an important component of the curriculum that too often is overlooked.

As she helped fifth-grader [REDACTED] learn the African drum piece his group will play during the concert, she rotated the cowbells to other students to see which ones would be best with different instruments.

If only she could give them more options.

"I want the community to hear them, and I want to put the emphasis on how important music is in developing well-rounded students," said [REDACTED], who primarily teaches vocal development because of the lack of instruments. "I really believe that if children grow up with a love for music, that they'll continue with it when they get older. It's been difficult at times. We're starting from scratch."

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From:   
Sent: Friday, November 12, 2004 10:44 AM  
To: Amato, Eileen; ; ; ; ; ;   
Subject: Tues., 11/16 & 11/23

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Just a reminder...

This Tues., 11/16, @ 8 A. M., Paul Evans, percussionist w/ the River City brass will be here for 1 period to give a workshop for 6th graders. We will meet in the gym.

The following Tues., the 23rd, 6th graders will be going to CAPA for the morning. They will be leaving by bus between 8:30 & 8:45. Bathroom visits should be taken care of before we depart. I will be leaving earlier that morning to take 2 students to CAPA to rehearse w/ the River City Brass.

I will be getting some permission slips to you early next week. Please encourage your students to start practicing their best behavior & manners so that we don't have to leave anyone behind.

Thanks for your help. If you have any questions, please ask.





1400 S. Braddock Ave., Suite E • Pittsburgh, PA 15218 • (412) 342-4444 • (412) 342-4448 Fax • [www.gatewaytothearts.org](http://www.gatewaytothearts.org)

## GATEWAY TO THE ARTS SCHOOL PROGRAMS

- Please copy and distribute **Teacher's Guide** (if one is included in this packet) as soon as possible to all grade level and special teachers.
- Please have someone meet and greet the artists when they arrive.
- Please provide a clean and clear performance area for the artists so that they may begin their set-up at least one half hour prior to the start of the program. A separate sheet is enclosed in this packet if there are any special set-up requirements. (Be sure to verify that the performance area is not in use for another activity, class or project on the day of the program!)
- Please provide enough time for audience seating so that the assembly can begin promptly.
- Please have someone introduce the artist(s) to the audience.
- Your invoice (or confirmation) is included in this packet. **Payment is due within 5 business days following the program.** Please mail your payment in to the Gateway office indicating name of school and date of program on your check. (Do not give checks to the artist(s) as all bookkeeping is processed by the Gateway office).

NOTE: The artist(s) will contact the school several days prior to the program to confirm the program time(s) and directions. If your school has not heard from the artist(s) prior to the program date, please call the Gateway office to confirm. Also, no cameras or video recorders may be used before, during or after the program unless special permission has been given prior to the performance by the artist and Gateway to the Arts.

### YOUR COMMENTS ARE IMPORTANT TO US.

We try to make our programs as relevant as possible to your curriculum and objectives. Please help us accomplish this by completing and returning the evaluation sheets provided in this packet.

THANK YOU!

~~Willsboro~~ *School District*  
~~Kelly~~ Elementary School

---

Your class has been chosen to host a Pitt Education Student for 5 visits. Students will do an observation, several read alouds and a small flex group.

Enclosed is a schedule, copies of their assignments, and the roster of interns. They will be contacting you to plan their sessions.

Please remember, they are beginning students. Try to help make their experience meaningful and have them carry the word they ~~they~~ is an inviting place for education and students.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Amato



Exhibit B.52- Pitt Student Packet

~~REDACTED~~: INTRO TO ELEM. ED.

(5 visits)

Week of ---

10/04 (school/classroom/community)

10/11 (except 10/12) (read-aloud #1)

10/18 (read-aloud #2)

10/25 (prediction/read aloud #3)

11/01 (share learning center)

a.m. visit 9:55 – 10:55 a.m.

| Name                | Time | Day   | Teacher                     | Room | Grade |
|---------------------|------|-------|-----------------------------|------|-------|
| <del>REDACTED</del> |      | Mon   | <del>Miss. [REDACTED]</del> | 02   | 1     |
| <del>REDACTED</del> |      | Tues  | <del>Miss. [REDACTED]</del> | 01   | 1     |
| <del>REDACTED</del> |      | Wed   | <del>Mrs. [REDACTED]</del>  | 03   | 1     |
| <del>REDACTED</del> |      | Wed   | <del>Miss. [REDACTED]</del> | 11   | 1     |
| <del>REDACTED</del> |      | Wed   | <del>Ms. [REDACTED]</del>   | 05   | 2     |
| <del>REDACTED</del> |      | Wed   | <del>Mrs. [REDACTED]</del>  | 06   | 2     |
| <del>REDACTED</del> |      | Wed   | <del>Miss. [REDACTED]</del> | 23   | 3     |
| <del>REDACTED</del> |      | Thurs | <del>Miss. [REDACTED]</del> | 24   | 3     |
| <del>REDACTED</del> |      | Thurs | <del>Ms. [REDACTED]</del>   | 20   | 4     |
| <del>REDACTED</del> |      | Thurs | <del>Mrs. [REDACTED]</del>  | 21   | 4     |
| <del>REDACTED</del> |      | Fri   | <del>Miss. [REDACTED]</del> | 26   | 5     |
| <del>REDACTED</del> |      | Fri   | <del>Miss. [REDACTED]</del> | 27   | 5     |
| <del>REDACTED</del> |      | Fri   | <del>Mrs. [REDACTED]</del>  | 28   | 5     |
| <del>REDACTED</del> |      | Fri   | <del>Ms. [REDACTED]</del>   | 38B  | 6     |
|                     |      |       |                             |      |       |



## *Literacy Field Experience Reflection Log*

Introduction to Elementary Teaching

Instruction & Learning 1000

Anna C. Quiggle & Kenneth A. Rigby, Instructors

### *Literacy Field Experience #1*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Describe the classroom:**

What does it look like? What grade is it? How is the room arranged? How many children are in the rooms?  
What is on the walls? \_\_\_\_\_

#### **What are the children doing?**

Be specific. Are they working alone, together, at desks?

#### **What is the teacher doing?**

Look at body language, voice inflection, where the teacher is located in the room.

#### **What worked? What didn't work?**

From your impression what worked and didn't work?

#### **Personal Reflections:**



## *Literacy Field Experience Reflection Log*

Introduction to Elementary Teaching

Instruction & Learning 1000

Anna C. Quiggle & Kenneth A. Rigby, Instructors

### *Literacy Field Experience #2*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

What book (Author, Title) did you select to read and why did you choose it?

How did you introduce the book to the children?

What questions did you ask to support student comprehension? What answers did you receive?

What kind of talk did you use after the reading?

What worked? What didn't work?

From your impression what worked and didn't work?

Personal Reflections:



## *Literacy Field Experience Reflection Log*

Introduction to Elementary Teaching

Instruction & Learning 1000

Anna C. Quiggle & Kenneth A. Rigby, Instructors

### *Literacy Field Experience #3*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

What book (Author, Title) did you select to read and why did you choose it?

How did you introduce the book to the children?

What questions did you ask to support student comprehension? What answers did you receive?

What kind of talk did you use after the reading?

What worked? What didn't work?

From your impression what worked and didn't work?

Personal Reflections:



## *Literacy Field Experience Reflection Log*

Introduction to Elementary Teaching

Instruction & Learning 1000

Anna C. Quiggle & Kenneth A. Rigby, Instructors

### *Literacy Field Experience #4*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

What book did you select to read and why did you choose it?

How did you get the students to write a story prediction prior to hearing the story?

How did you encourage the children to orally share their predictions?

How did you introduce the book to the children?

What questions did you ask to support student comprehension? What answers did you receive?

*Literacy Field Experience #4*

What kind of talk did you use after the reading?

How did the students do using the writing rubric?

**What worked? What didn't work?**

From your impression what worked and didn't work?

**Personal Reflections:**



## *Literacy Field Experience Reflection Log*

Introduction to Elementary Teaching

Instruction & Learning 1000

Anna C. Quiggle & Kenneth A. Rigby, Instructors

### *Literacy Field Experience #5*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly describe your game/learning center and its purpose(s) with the students.

How did you introduce and demonstrate your game/learning center to the children?

Where were the children comfortable understanding the directions, playing the game or using the learning center?

How did the students react during the activity?

What worked? What didn't work?

From your impression what worked and didn't work?

Personal Reflections:



# Introduction to Elementary Teaching

Anna C. Quiggle & Kenneth A. Rigby, Instructors

## Literacy Board Game or Learning Center—Sixteen (16) Points

You are to construct a literacy based board game or learning center that is appropriate for elementary age children that will assist them in learning an essential spelling, phonics or a vocabulary skill. It is suggested that you consider connecting your activity to one of your read aloud books. This response must be developed and constructed individually. You will present your board game/learning center to the class on November 2, 2004 and will use you activity with a group of students during your fifth visit of your *Literacy Field Experience*. This visit will be scheduled during the week of November 1 or November 8, 2004. The board game or learning center that you construct should:

- Be constructed in a neat and durable manner
- Be age appropriate for elementary age children
- Be unique and/or innovative in thought and design
- Assure that the child learns, enhances or reinforces an essential literacy skill
- Actively involve the child as a participant
- Be child friendly in its layout
- Be child friendly in its appearance
- Include clear, developmentally appropriate directions

### Scoring Rubric for Board Game or Learning Center:

|   | Proficient 2 | Basic 1 | Emerging 0 |
|---|--------------|---------|------------|
| Constructed in a neat and durable manner          |              |         |            |
| Age appropriate for elementary age children       |              |         |            |
| Unique and/or innovative                          |              |         |            |
| Literacy skill is learned, enhanced or reinforced |              |         |            |
| Child is an active participant                    |              |         |            |
| Child friendly in it layout                       |              |         |            |
| Child friendly in it appearance                   |              |         |            |
| Clear directions are included                     |              |         |            |

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Total Score \_\_\_\_\_



## ~~Elementary~~ Elementary:

Student involvement is outstanding at ~~the~~, including a very active student council that sponsored events for moms and dads, visits to nursing homes, field trips, dances and even mentoring of younger students by older students. Highlights from ~~the~~ Elementary include:

- Strong emphasis on the components of literacy: comprehension, phonics and phonemic awareness, vocabulary and fluency.
- Parent literacy nights for each grade level, providing grade-specific literacy skills that parents can use to help their children become excellent readers.
- Concentration on mathematics and problem solving, guided by ~~the~~'s math coach.
- Extensive after-school tutoring programs in reading and mathematics.
- Partnership with Deloitte & Touche for Impact Day, where volunteers provided landscaping, painting and terrific interactions between Deloitte's staff and our students.
- Numerous visits by Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra performers to get students excited about classical music and prepared for field trips to the Symphony.



### **3.0 APPENDIX C – SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT DOCUMENTS**

This section houses School Improvement Documents that were relevant to Jefferson School during the three-year period of this study. A complete listing of the exhibits, their descriptions, sources and dates can be found on pages 125-28.

[REDACTED] School District  
Distinguished Educator Team

1. Dr. [REDACTED]
2. Dr. [REDACTED]
3. Dr. [REDACTED]

PDE Contact Information:

PROGRAM DIRECTOR: Dr. Juan Baughn, Special Assistant to the Secretary

PROGRAM MANAGER: Ms. Dana Klouser (717) 705-3771//[dklouser@state.pa.us](mailto:dklouser@state.pa.us)



dynamic in ██████████ schools. Present school improvement efforts have been impeded by some critical barriers including (but not limited to):

- A restricted exchange of common understandings and communication among administrators, teachers, support staff, parents, and the community at large;
- A pervasive belief that an unusually high concentration of low socioeconomic status and student transience limit the potential for academic progress achieved in other educational settings;
- A prolonged history of grade level teachers and subject area departments teaching without a written curriculum correlated with Pennsylvania's Academic Standards and PSSA expectations;
- An annual exit of faculty members and principals attributed to the lure of higher pay and more attractive working conditions in other school districts;
- An operational set of referral protocols that may facilitate an over-identification of special education students and subsequent removal from the regular class settings or transfer to other program services located beyond district boundaries;
- A limited but influential core of middle and high school faculty described as resistant to research-based practices that have been shown to significantly advance academic progress and the achievement of student proficiency;
- A tolerance and acceptability for high levels of absenteeism by students and staff;
- A remaining cadre of teachers still unable to use computers, software and networking capabilities, and
- Elementary and secondary school facilities that have not been configured to accommodate physically handicapped students and staff.

This list of barriers, if taken as inherently limiting or unmovable, is daunting. The DE Team heard that these elements contributed to an atmosphere of externalizing responsibility for individual student achievement and occasionally were seen as institutional excuses for a lack of progress in equipping students to attain proficiency. It should be noted that these infrastructure variables are mostly matters of personal communication. The most dire infrastructure concerns are the tradeoffs, unspoken agreements and assumptions that accumulate in any school organization over time that draw focus away from the mission of advancing student achievement and inherently keep expectations and standards low.

The DE Team asserts that taken singly and addressed with alacrity, the considerable passion for improvement, and the renewed sense of pride in ██████████ schools, there is not one element on this list that cannot be addressed and minimized. While it is incumbent on all

teachers and instructional leaders to provide the best teaching and schools possible for students, there is an equal share of responsibility for eliminating barriers to that end.

Questions to consider about *drift* use of Infrastructure

1. Is there an overall plan (or an ongoing process for developing a plan) for future building maintenance or improvements and how is the goal of student proficiency targeted in planning for optimal school usage?
2. How can the district as a whole come together to use the data structure and resources available to focus tightly on student proficiency?
3. Can the district minimize the barriers that sometimes occasion a history of relationships that can shift responsibility for student learning away from what faculty can do to foster student learning?

CONTINUOUS LEARNING ETHIC

A district operating in a culture of continuous learning expects that adults will be engaged in meaningful tasks, accept responsibility for student success, demand high quality work of one another, and provide mutual support to reassure student achievement. Challenges are greeted with a problem-solving approach and change is contemplated as a normal part of continuous improvement.

The DE Team observed that [REDACTED] has a Professional Development Plan that complies with Pennsylvania Department of Education requirements. We were simultaneously intrigued to hear that building principals had not been included in its planning or formation. Because the DE Team observed variation in the quality of teaching district-wide, professional development activities might be best customized to the needs of teachers based on the results of formative supervision and classroom observations by principals. It is anticipated that professional development will be directly correlated with student achievement by focusing on the fundamental needs of teachers. The needs assessment to determine goals for professional development should, perhaps, be drawn from the teachers as well as administrators and district leaders.

Principals do their cause of instructional improvement a great service when they demonstrate the importance and value of continuous learning by actively participating in all professional development activities. The presence of the instructional leader signals to teachers that the topic is important, that their attendance and participation is noted, and that the district is a learning community.

Communication of specific district vision is a vital part of the continuous learning ethic. Instructional leaders should consider conferring on a regular and consistent basis to communicate [REDACTED]'s vision and demonstrate effective teaching through functional agendas and productive meetings. Just as expectations for student achievement should be high, so should the

expectations for teacher effectiveness. Recognition of outstanding and exceptional behaviors and achievements of teachers are affirmed and touted in a way that strengthens the behaviors in a community of learners.

Teachers may need additional training in the accessing, analysis, interpretation and implementation of data to their daily instruction. The PDE tools should be demonstrated to the teachers so that they can know and understand the sources of data and what their responsibilities are for obtaining and using data appropriately.

Presenters who conduct professional development activities may need to be reminded to use the common language that is being promoted among the staff. One of the Western Pennsylvania Writing Project presenters we observed reverted to Madeline Hunter vocabulary without cross-referencing it to the language of the Principles of Learning or the Charlotte Danielson Framework. Presenters may need to reinforce the district direction so that teachers are not confused about common goals and common language. During the simultaneous elementary in-service sessions, the goal of developing standards-based report cards was held in abeyance because of timing considerations. We heard from teachers that they were dismayed when (two days later) they received a draft, sample standards-based report card in their mailboxes - even though they thought it had been decided not to proceed four weeks before the end of the marking period.

Continuous learning is commonly a shared 'value' for all district employees from food service workers to the superintendent. Because custodians and security personnel are often the first people to meet and greet parents and students, they may need to be specifically trained to do so appropriately. The number of security guards may warrant review and students and teachers will benefit if they are knowledgeable about the names and locations of teachers and the respective subject areas. Ideally, their verbal and body language demonstrates that they are a part of the district team and take their responsibilities as "public helpers" seriously. Their value and impact on visitors and their perceptions of the district are infectious and important.

*Questions to consider about Continuous Learning Ethic*

1. How can district leadership provide more learning for teachers about standards and strategic instructional techniques to increase student proficiency?
2. How can a professional development plan that includes principal and lead teacher input be developed in the near future?
3. Are teachers involved in an examination of data that is non-judgmental and that informs teaching?
4. Is there a way to include ancillary staff in statements of district purpose and in basic training to guide their responses to students and the public at large?

## COMMUNITY

The DE Team lived in and superficially explored Wilkinsburg during the five day visit. We were told of the [REDACTED] of 60 years ago, when the borough was known as the "City of 100 Churches" and 'the women' (not the team's characterization) wore white gloves to market on Wood Street. Certainly the municipality is the stereotypically sad story of an inner city section turned on its head in two generations. The focus on collection of delinquent taxes for properties that yield very little of value to the district's budget tell the sad tale. Boarded up businesses, significant amounts of Section 8 housing, a graffiti-covered pharmacy with bars on the windows next to two different check-cashing storefronts paint the landscape. The number of jobless (and in some cases homeless) on the streets of [REDACTED] in 2005 completes the picture of a community clinging to the pride of old - but generally destitute as a source of inspiration or support for its schools.

The team observed that district and municipal government personnel and services are generally afforded low marks for their work. Tendencies to blame the school and government for community based issues are prevalent. Additionally, the district blames the municipality and the municipality blames the district for the depth and breadth of problems within their shared geographic boundaries. When focused on the school, the community, including parents and business or municipal representatives blame school personnel for fiscal mismanagement, employment favoritism, and low student achievement and graduation rates.

The University of Pittsburgh team is playing a critical role in managing and initiating fiscal and research-based academic and supervisory program initiatives. This work appears to be establishing a foundation for more effective management of fiscal resources, a K-12 written curriculum, staff supervision, and student assessment as well as reading, math, and writing proficiency. The 'Pitt Team' is also involved in building community support whenever possible for [REDACTED]'s schools.

The district has not recovered from serious student management problems in the three elementary schools and middle and high school that appeared to peak about six years ago. As a result, the community is reluctant to embrace the schools and offer its support. As the district works to establish and maintain fiscal responsibility, instructional competence, and student proficiency the leadership simultaneously needs to expend valuable energy building and sustaining 'bridges' with a reluctant public. Because of low socio-economic factors, there is wider service support infused into the school. This support includes a multiplicity of social service initiatives, in some cases funded by foundation grants.

As evidence of dissatisfaction with the climate for teaching and learning, the number of parents choosing to enroll children in charter schools, independent schools, parochial schools and special education centers is substantially decreasing enrollments and increasing transportation/tuition costs to the district. The team was told that decline in enrollment may necessitate the need to consolidate the elementary schools. Doing this while sustaining the limited community support for 'neighborhood schools' will be challenging. In this sense, there is a simultaneous rebuilding of relationships with a disenfranchised community as leadership strives to rebuild the [REDACTED] School District's reputation and identity from within.

Questions to consider about Community

1. Is there a concerted plan to reintroduce the [REDACTED] schools to the many constituencies of the community without a reason to enter a school building?
2. How can relationships with municipal authorities be improved to create synergy and minimize blame for [REDACTED] many dilemmas?
3. Is there a direct initiative aimed at re-claiming students from nonpublic schools and enhancing the district's general reputation among community members?

## **Washington State School District**



Reflections on the  
Distinguished Educator Initiative  
Quality Review Report  
September 19-23, 2005

## **Mission Statement**

The Mission of the  
Distinguished Educator  
is to build capacity  
in school districts  
to enable students  
to achieve at high levels  
by creating schools  
that are safe  
academically, socially,  
emotionally and physically.

## What It's All About...



11/15/2005

[REDACTED] School  
District Quality Review

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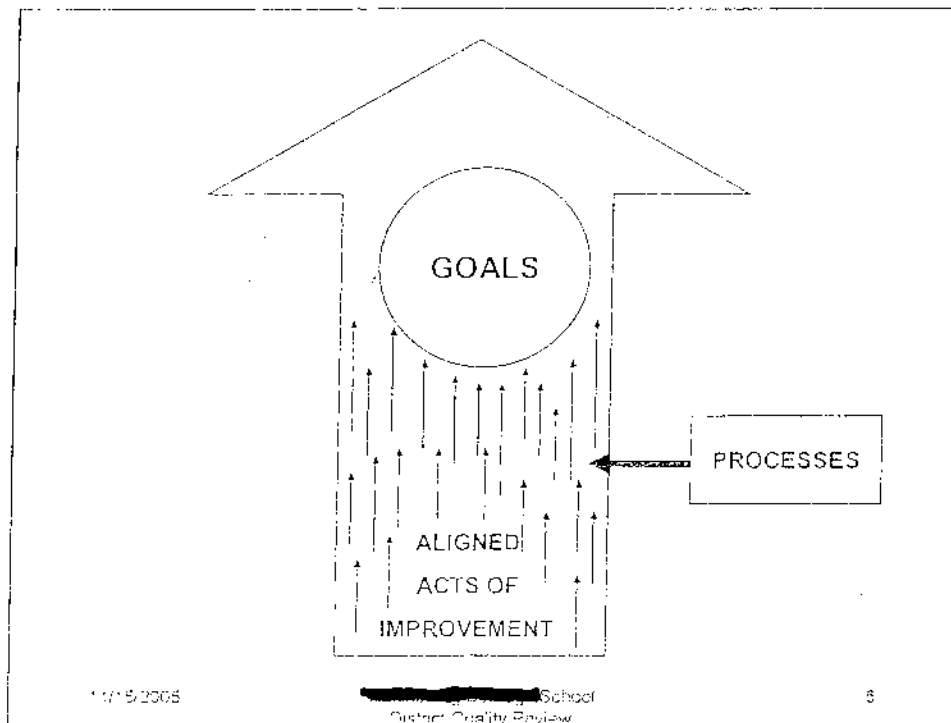
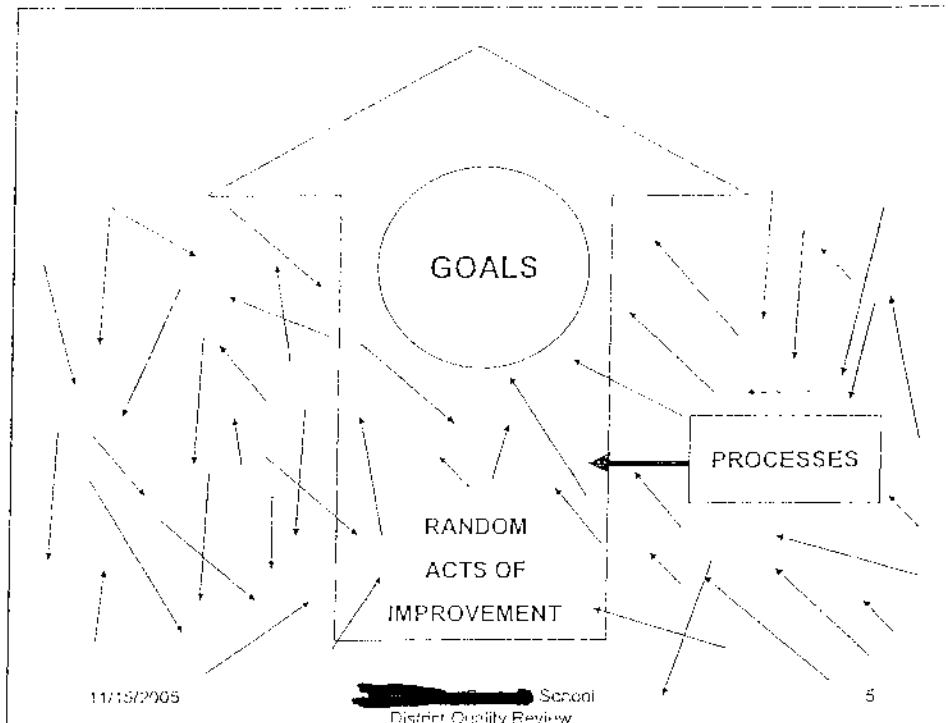
## Today's Agenda

- Thanks and Introductions
  - Dr. [REDACTED]
  - Dr. [REDACTED]
  - Dr. [REDACTED]
- Purpose of Meeting
  - Consider 7 Focus Areas of Quality Review
  - Reflect on Related Questions
  - Develop Preliminary Collaborative DE Entry Plan
    - Communications Process
    - Contact Persons
    - Tasks, Projects, Activities
    - Time Schedule
    - Locations
- Next Steps

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[REDACTED] School  
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## Focus Area 1: Vision

Vision is a clear and compelling picture of school District effectiveness that includes proficiency for all students. Focused on student achievement, the vision inherently sets guidelines and boundaries for discussion, decision-making, policies, action, and performance at all levels throughout the school District. A clearly articulated, data-informed, lived vision of proficiency for all students and attainment of Adequate Yearly Progress guides all processes in the School District as a standards-based system.

11/15/2005

[REDACTED] School  
District Quality Review

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## Focus Area 1: Reflections on Vision

- How can we focus administration, faculty, staff and community on a shared vision for student achievement?
- How can we embed the PA academic standards and assessment anchors into effective teaching and learning practices?
- How can we build District capacity to create lasting systemic change in keeping with NCLB?

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[REDACTED] School  
District Quality Review

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## Focus Area 2: Data

Data drives decision-making, instructional design, delivery of instruction, and the professional development necessary to ensure student achievement. Individual student proficiency as measured by performance on PSSA and District attainment of Adequate Yearly Progress are at the forefront of data usage and contemplation.

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District Quality Review

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## Focus Area 2: Reflections on Data

- How can we consistently communicate data to all constituencies?
- How can data be analyzed, interpreted and applied to the design and delivery of instruction?
- How can we use technology to describe, design, deliver data and to develop people and document progress?
- How can we guide students in managing their own achievement data?

11/15/2005

[REDACTED] School  
District Quality Review

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## Quality Review Focus Area Guidelines

| Focus Area                   | Details  |
|------------------------------|--|
| Focus/Vision                 | Vision is a clear and compelling "picture" of school District effectiveness that includes proficiency for all students. Focused on student achievement, the vision inherently sets guidelines and boundaries for discussion, decision-making, policies, action, and performance at all levels throughout the school District. A clearly articulated, data-informed, lived vision of proficiency for all students and attainment of Adequate Yearly Progress informs all processes in the School District as a standards-based system.  |
| Data                         | <p>Data drives decision making, instructional design, delivery of instruction, and professional development necessary to assure student achievement. Individual student proficiency as measured by performance on PSSA and District attainment of Adequate Yearly Progress are at the forefront of data usage and contemplation.</p> <p>There is documentation to support the assertion that the District is a data-driven standards-based system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Step 1 of the Action Sequence, Data ("Where are we now?")</u> Describe in detail the current status of student achievement with respect to academic standards in reading and mathematics as well as assessment anchors. Specifically reference PSSA data and District Adequate Yearly Progress standing.</li> <li>• <u>Step 2 of the Action Sequence, Design ("Where do we want to go?")</u> As student achievement data is analyzed, it provides District teachers and leaders with reference points for developing instructional design (based on research-proven practices) assuring increased student achievement. Data-driven procedures for review and accountability to assure the design is effective are implemented.</li> <li>• <u>Step 3 of the Action Sequence, Delivery ("How are we going to get there?")</u> Data, observations, and feedback are utilized to assure that there is unified understanding of instructional design and that its implementation is sustained. Supervisory and data collection checkpoints are established to assure delivery is effective and that instructional design is implemented.</li> <li>• <u>Step 4 of the Action Sequence, Development of People ("What additional skills and training do we need?")</u> Workshops, in-service training, and faculty seminars are organized and implemented in a timely manner. Data and faculty feedback loops are utilized to determine and prioritize needs for professional development that is aligned with instructional design. Survey data and procedures to monitor the value and effectiveness of faculty and staff professional development are implemented and reviewed.</li> <li>• <u>Step 5 of the Action Sequence, Documentation ("How do we track our progress?")</u> Data are utilized to monitor progress in student achievement and results from Design, Delivery, and Development as described above. Documentation includes statistics and anecdotal records assuring consistent, measured progress toward student proficiency and District attainment of Adequate Yearly Progress.</li> </ul> |
| Quality Teaching             | Quality Teaching results when a qualified, effective teacher delivers rigorous curriculum and executes reliable assessments using standards-aligned instructional materials and research-proven methods. Evidence-based instruction (including data verifying student achievement) is routinely utilized to assure <i>all</i> students learn. Targeted assistance is provided for individual students (or subgroups of students) who lack prerequisite, antecedent knowledge and understanding <i>or</i> who struggle with more traditional methods of instruction.  |
| Quality Leadership           | Leadership is strategic and deliberate in sustaining focus on student achievement and implementing a standards-based system to assure teaching effectiveness. A strong and capable instructional leadership team builds a culture of trust, continuous improvement, and accountability for performance. The sequence of data-design-delivery-development-documentation described above is used to build consensus and a shared vision among teaching professionals to cultivate the relentless pursuit of individual student accomplishment.   |
| Artful Use of Infrastructure | Artful use of infrastructure requires the strategic alignment & utilization of faculty, staff, facilities, time, fiscal resources, and available technology to realize the District vision of proficiency, achievement, and success for all students. Infrastructure plays a vital role in creating conditions that support effective teaching and assist faculty members in holding high expectations for one another. It provides intensive supports for students who may struggle <i>and</i> supports learning teams, staff members, or schools adjusting to a realigned District vision. Artful Use of Infrastructure is essential to the creation of a 'high demand and high support' school climate.   |
| Continuous Learning Ethic    | A continuous learning ethic is exhibited in a school culture of evidence-based collaborative practice, continuous professional learning, and collective professional accountability. Teachers and staff are actively engaged while accepting responsibility for student success and demanding a high quality of work from one another. A problem-solving approach is evident when facing challenges; change is the norm as an anticipated component of continuous improvement; and adult learning is expected and embraced.  |
| Community                    | Community partnerships are sought and engaged by teachers and school leaders. Authentic relationships with students, families, businesses, higher education institutions, and the community-at-large are cultivated and view as resources for the schools. A strategy and system for communicating with the community is in place. Community health and social services regularly interact with the schools or are invited and provided space in school buildings to work in partnerships to prescriptively assist with matters that might otherwise interfere with student attendance or achievement. The community is actively involved in developing District priorities.   |

### Focus Area 3: Quality Teaching

Quality Teaching results when qualified, effective teachers deliver rigorous curriculum and execute reliable assessments using standards-based instructional materials and research-proven methods. Evidence-based instruction (including data verifying student achievement) is routinely used to ensure all students learn. Targeted assistance is provided for individual students (or subgroups of students) who lack prior knowledge and understanding or who struggle with more traditional methods of instruction.

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### Focus Area 3: Reflections on Quality Teaching

- How can we collaborate to develop a consistent, unified strategy to improve student achievement?
- How can we develop curriculum guides that are standards-based, aligned with assessment anchors and articulated across the grade levels?
- How can we use differentiated instruction to include students with disabilities into regular education classrooms?

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## Focus Area 4: Quality Leadership

Leadership is strategic and deliberate in sustaining focus on student achievement and implementing a standards-based system to ensure teaching effectiveness. A strong and capable instructional leadership team builds a culture of trust, continuous improvement, and accountability for performance. The sequence of data-design-delivery-development-documentation is used to build consensus and a shared vision among teaching professionals to cultivate the relentless pursuit of individual student accomplishment.

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## Focus Area 4: Reflections on Quality Leadership

- How can we focus the leadership team on student achievement?
- How can we attract, retain, motivate and strengthen the leadership team?
- How can we help the leadership team to conduct formative and summative classroom observations?

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## Focus Area 5: Artful Use of Infrastructure

Artful use of infrastructure requires the strategic alignment and utilization of faculty, staff, facilities, time, fiscal resources, and available technology to realize the District vision of proficiency, achievement, and success for all students. Infrastructure plays a vital role in creating conditions that support effective teaching and learning, and assists faculty members in holding high expectations for one another. It provides intensive supports for students who may struggle and supports learning teams, staff members, or schools adjusting to a realigned District vision.

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## Focus Area 5: Reflections on Artful Use of Infrastructure

- How can we contribute to a plan for optimizing and improving District facilities?
- How can we structure data and galvanize resources to ensure student achievement?
- How can we maximize communication among all internal and external District constituents?

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## Focus Area 6: Continuous Learning Ethic

A continuous learning ethic is exhibited in a school culture of standards and evidence-based, collaborative practice, continuous professional learning, and collective professional accountability. Teachers and staff are actively engaged while accepting responsibility for student success and demanding a high quality of work from one another. A problem-solving approach is evident when facing challenges; change is the norm as an anticipated component of continuous improvement; and adult learning is expected and embraced.

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District Quality Review

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## Focus Area 6: Reflections on Continuous Learning Ethic

- How can we enhance teachers' knowledge and skill in standards-based teaching and learning strategies?
- How can we develop customized, job-embedded professional development plans that support both individual and District goals?
- How can we use data in non-judgmental ways to inform teaching?
- How can we help ancillary staff recognize their role as District ambassadors to the community at large?

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## Focus Area 7: Community

Community partnerships are sought and engaged by teachers and school leaders. Authentic relationships with students, families, businesses, higher education institutions, and the community-at-large are cultivated and viewed as resources for the schools. A strategy and system for communicating with the community is in place. Community health and social services regularly interact with the schools or are invited and provided space in school buildings to work in partnership with the District.

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## Focus Area 7: Reflections on Community

- How can we strengthen collaboration between community agencies and the District?
- How can we maintain and improve the working relationship between municipal authorities and the school community?
- How can we enhance, communicate and promote the District's positive aspects so that families keep their children enrolled?

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## Next Steps

12/15/2005

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ High School  
*District Quality Review*

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Pennsylvania Department of Education  
Distinguished Educator Initiative

**[REDACTED] School District**  
Quality Review

This report summarizes observations and interviews conducted during the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) Quality Review visit to **[REDACTED] School District** over a five-day period from September 19<sup>th</sup> through the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2005. It is a synthesis of interview notes, observations, and an examination of documents and evidence providing a picture of the district's decision making, instructional practices, and teaching impact. The review is designed to discern the congruence of district policies, procedures, and practices with the goal of academic proficiency for all **[REDACTED]** students as measured by the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). It is anticipated that this review will contribute to a school improvement partnership between the Distinguished Educator (DE) Initiative and the **[REDACTED] School District**.

The team acknowledges that its observations are interpretive and that the structure of any school district visit over a short timeframe (however well organized) may inherently limit the depth of some perceptions. While we cannot 'know' the multiple challenges facing Wilkinsburg as well as the men and women who work and live there, many dilemmas that school districts face have similar themes and possible solutions. Our work focuses on these similarities. The team's observations and suggested strategies concentrate on improving student achievement and on attaining Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status district-wide and for each school building.

The DE Team is grateful to the leadership, faculty, and staff of the **[REDACTED] School District** for their invitation and willingness to participate in this school improvement effort. During our visits we were impressed with the dedication and candor among those we met who serve the students and families of Wilkinsburg. Without their openness and assistance, this report and the collaborative partnership it facilitates would not be possible.

There are seven, targeted areas in the Quality Review framework: **District Focus and Vision, Data, Quality Leadership, Quality Teaching, Artful Use of Infrastructure, Continuous Learning Ethic, and Community**. Our team's most prevalent observations are listed in each of these categories and some questions for reflection follow our notes. Follow-up on this report includes Distinguished Educator availability for consultation, dialogue, and ongoing support. The DE Team mission is to build organizational capacity to foster high level student achievement - and to help assure that **[REDACTED]** schools are academically sound; socially accepting; emotionally responsive; and physically safe.

Distinguished Educator Team Members:

Dr. **[REDACTED]**, Team Leader

Dr. **[REDACTED]**

Dr. **[REDACTED]**

Dr. **[REDACTED]**

### FOCUS/VISION

Effective school organizations have a sense of urgency that drives their mission as they move from dreams to reality. A clear, shared district vision is vital if consistent student achievement and proficiency as measured by AYP is to be attained. [REDACTED] School District has a broad, inclusive vision about increasing student learning. There was consensus (if not, unanimity) among the many professionals the DE Team spoke with that increasing student performance is a priority in [REDACTED]. There was also a pervasive, prevailing sense that the means to realizing this vision is distributed over several programs and initiatives and that the path leading to an effective, unified system to accomplish the mission sometimes becomes (as one individual put it) "very blurry."

Almost 'to a person' each individual and small group the DE Team spoke with articulated the desire to help students grow academically and to attain proficiency on PSSA tests. The faculty and building leadership were clear on how distinct elements or programs in practice (or in development) in the district could help students learn. But there was little discussion about how the discrete initiatives 'fit together' and all contributed to a high level of focus on the outcome of student achievement. There did not appear to be a coherent roadmap for implementing the broad vision of improved student performance.

Absent a clear mission statement and a sense of direction to assure increased student learning, each building faculty and/or various departments within the school system seemed to provide rationales that fit several self-selected criteria. These rationales are not proving effective in achieving the goal of student proficiency, eventually leading to the attainment of consistent Adequate Yearly Progress. It was striking that (excluding district and building level leadership) each and every person working in [REDACTED] schools with whom DE Team members spoke expressed a strong desire (if not, a fervent assertion) that the district's students should be able to achieve proficiency in greater proportions – yet not one followed their declaration with an unprompted description of intention to examine past practice or to approach teaching in a different way.

#### Questions to consider about Focus/Vision

1. How can district leadership build faculty ownership and develop a single mission that incorporates reference to student proficiency as measured by the PSSA?
2. What can be done in the short term to further focus teaching in all school buildings around state standards?
3. How can we direct the passion among the teachers toward embracing change and looking at student proficiency in a standards-based systemic manner?

## DATA

Having a well-designed system for managing student achievement data is essential for making quality decisions that impact student achievement and system performance. The DE Team observed that there is substantial data within the ██████████ School District but that its accessibility and usefulness is sometimes inconsistent. The district administers several standardized tests each year providing faculty members with information about individual student achievement and, through interpretation, the school's curriculum. There is little evidence that all of the data is used or interpreted. Interviews we conducted indicated ambiguity about the use of data to drive instruction at the school building, classroom, and student levels. Some faculty members (representing elementary through secondary grades) expressed misgiving, that assessments for specific curricular initiatives are "piling up" -- and that teachers receive little or no direction about (in one teacher's words) "what to do less of" in order to allow focused instructional time and to assure that the data from assessments is applicable and used appropriately.

A focused, professional culture of inquiry helps assure that teachers and instructional leadership value data and that it specifically informs instructional strategy and student learning rather than providing evaluative information about a particular program or becoming an archived source file. The team observed initiatives under way during our visit that may shed light on specific student learning patterns (i.e. 4SIGIT) that can be used to focus instruction and enhance student achievement. Each assessment we saw or heard about producing student data had a constructive purpose. The DE Team observed, however, that there did not appear to be a pattern for data collection that was consistent across an annual timeframe. Nor did there appear to be awareness about how the accumulated data interrelates to provide a broader picture of student achievement or how it might be viewed as a portrait of individual learner strengths and weaknesses.

A system to track student performance longitudinally to ensure that there is value added for each student during each school year in literacy and math is a necessary component for reassuring increases in student achievement. The administration has an instrument for such analysis available in the PVAAS system that provides for tracking of student progress on the PSSA as well as predictions for student achievement on future PSSA tests.

The DE Team suggests consolidation of meaningful assessments at appropriate grade levels as well as training in statistical interpretation to assure that data drives curriculum development, curriculum revision, and instruction.

As the habits of data-driven instructional decision-making take root, informed conclusions will enable a viable, written curriculum that is organized and sequenced assuring that all students have ample opportunity to learn essential content aligned with state standards. While there has been significant emphasis on the quality of instruction in Wilkinsburg across the last two years, the data presently available indicate that a K-12 curriculum specifying student skill acquisition and monitored teaching methodologies would benefit student achievement and clarify expectations. Effective use of assessment data to improve instruction is a time consuming and difficult task. The DE Team foresees a need to provide substantial training in using data to

drive instruction as well as to provide time for teachers and administrators to collaborate and focus on student achievement.

Questions to consider about Data

1. How can data be distributed consistently throughout the district for reference in curricular development and lesson planning?
2. Is there a way that principals and other instructional leaders can present data and conduct 'data roundtables' with faculty in a way that is productive and non-threatening?
3. Can faculty be trained to share data and information through the established district intranet in a fluid, constructive way to cultivate a healthy exchange of views?

QUALITY TEACHING

The DE Team saw several examples of dedicated teachers in action with their students. While general teacher commitment to students was evident, effective practices (using data and specific teaching strategies for improving achievement) were varied. Many pre-K through sixth grade teachers and students appeared to be well engaged in teaching and learning. While striving for a similar learning community, the consensus was that the secondary teachers generally seemed to have difficulty cultivating a similar learning environment. The team noted an undercurrent of relatively disengaged, non-accountable talk and restless movement among students that presented a challenge for teachers to manage. As a result, some secondary faculty seemed to have difficulty focusing students and obtaining their full attention before initiating lessons.

Overall, teachers had good relationships with students and it was clear that they knew the family circumstances of some students in detail. Most direct teaching was sourced in adopted texts and did not address state standards with specificity. There did not appear to be written curriculum guides in use. In the absence of a complete, written, aligned and articulated curriculum, some teachers discussed a syllabus for individual courses. Summaries (a maximum of 2 pages) clearly outlining the Academic Standards, Assessment Anchors, instructional goals, textbook, materials and topical areas were suggested by two teachers during discussion. This practice may contribute to the work already under way on a thorough curriculum guide. Curriculum alignment with the Academic Standards and articulation among grade levels and content areas was suggested.

The members of the team noted that principals collect lesson plans in their respective offices. It did not seem readily apparent that teachers receive direct or specific feedback about the planning process. The objectives in the lesson plans the DE Team surveyed did not include some basic characteristics (i.e. performance, conditions, or criteria.) The planning we did see included descriptions of teacher procedures but did not include student outcomes or expected student achievement. The DE Team noted that the district is working on a new teacher

observation instrument and process. It was not clear whether the revisions would reflect the recently proposed PDE 426, 427, 428 Teacher Evaluation Forms.

The district has a significant number of students in special education (12+% of entire enrollment) and several (130+) students receiving services outside the district in approved private schools, special education centers and in other alternative settings. When the team asked questions about identification of students with special needs, its members received answers that differed about procedures in various district locations. It was noted that there were several special education classes in the middle and high schools. Some secondary special education teachers indicated that the most prevalent categorization for their students involved emotional needs. Although it may simply be a matter of semantics, it was hard for the team not to wonder why there are no emotional support classes at the secondary level.

Although there is evidence of computer workstation availability, there is little evidence of infusion of technology into teaching and learning. Team members noted several computer labs and were told that at least one (in the high school library) was a hub for advanced computer study. The DE Team was impressed to learn that [REDACTED] faculty has access to a district Intranet as a platform for professional contact, sharing, and learning. The team's experience indicates that a district Intranet is an effective method of internal communication among administration, faculty and staff. District policies, procedures, forms, human resources documents, curriculum, planned courses and other common items can be accessible via an Intranet. It was suggested that employees be trained to use this technology as a tool to increase effectiveness.

#### Questions to consider about Quality Teaching

1. How can the leadership and faculty work together to consolidate the many guiding principles (LRDC models, the Economy League, and CDDRE - Success for All among others) of [REDACTED] into a unified set of strategies for student proficiency?
2. How will the district go about drafting cohesive curriculum guides for reading and mathematics?
3. What are the plans for incorporating special education students into the general student population and developing a unified view of inclusion among school leadership?

#### QUALITY LEADERSHIP

Leadership in the [REDACTED] School District during our visit appeared to be in transition. In addition to the anticipated resignation of a long tenured superintendent, the building principals are all fairly new to their positions. Several district constituencies cited lack of continuity and longevity among instructional leaders during talks with the DE Team. On more than a few occasions we heard that "just when things seemed to be lining up for an effective year, a key person departed the district" (or words to that effect). Chronic turnover is a problem in any

school system – but is even more difficult when the district is striving for improvement and rebuilding itself on several fronts.

A challenge for the school administration is to develop creative (strategic) solutions to overcome the limitations caused by the district's physical facilities and fiscal resources. The team agreed with many district leaders that the high school–middle school and elementary buildings are in need of improvements or renovations to bring them up to current educational and labor and industry standards. Central Office officials confirmed that the district has serious, continuing financial problems. The Quality Review process revealed some questions about use of available resources to effectively focus on student achievement. There is the possibility that some financial resources currently available might be utilized differently toward instructional use to foster improved student achievement. These are pressing long-term difficulties for the district.

In the shorter term, it was observed that instructional leadership is trying to build a comprehensive package of approaches to enhance student performance. The DE Team was encouraged to hear that the direction among district administrators was to maintain a relentless, aligned, and pervasive focus on high levels of student achievements in literacy and math. This atmosphere will certainly pay dividends as [REDACTED] continues to improve. These good intentions and a needed optimistic orientation notwithstanding, the district does not presently appear to be organized around student achievement.

The administration may want to look at the possibilities of revising the middle school and high school schedules to accommodate the learning needs of students and to provide the time necessary to use highly effective research-based instructional strategies. The middle school schedule appears to be somewhat directed by the high school schedule. Some middle school core courses appear (in the absence of a rotation) to be 90 minutes in length and some 50 minutes in length. The high school classes are 49 minutes in length and with time taken for attendance and other non-instructional functions there may be only 30-35 minutes available for actual knowledge acquisition. The calendar indicates 175 days of instruction. Under optimal conditions, students may receive only 102 hours of instruction per course per year. Such a timeline inhibits the acquisition of essential content in many cases.

Administrators should be proactive in identifying and agreeing to the common focus for the district and on the specific steps for achieving success. It may be advisable to initiate an ongoing, consistent campaign convincing district employees and the community at large that all students can and will learn if a quality educational program is developed and implemented. It is likely necessary to provide content area teachers with ongoing effective strategies to implement the 'Adopt an Anchor' program (reading across the curriculum, writing across the curriculum, and math across the curriculum) and to monitor the implementation of these strategies.

The district and school leadership may need additional training to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to implement the district's vision for student academic performance. As part of a unified commitment (and to answer some concerns about leadership continuity) administrators who manage and implement the policies and procedures set by the Board of School Directors may need to be guided by a viable, current, and fair Act 93 Meet and Discuss Agreement.

The University of Pittsburgh team of advisors at ██████████ for the past two years and has either completed or initiated several positive elements. There is a natural inclination to try and 'fix everything' (or most things) all at once. Based on discussions with members of the DE Team, some leaders suggest students may be better served in the short run by focusing on improving literacy and math. We suggest the 'Pitt Team' continue to devote part of their effort to continued improvements in the operation of the business office where there appears to have been significant progress.

Questions to consider about Quality Leadership

1. What plans are being made to train the new team of principals around a unified approach to teaching and learning?
2. Is there a plan among the board and senior administrators to try to close (or minimize) the 'revolving door' as principals arrive and leave ██████████ schools?
3. Are the instructional leaders of each building reviewing lesson plans and meeting with teachers to assure lessons directly relate to state standards and that assessment anchors and essential content are part of the planning process?

ARTFUL USE OF INFRASTRUCTURE

Schools with high and sustained levels of student achievement have established seamless linkages and a healthy balance among student aspirations, parent expectations, and teacher commitment to a rigorous written curriculum and quality instruction for all students. Under ideal conditions, these indicators are supported by a leadership team, Board, and educational community that ensure a safe learning environment, and funding necessary to assure readily available instructional materials, equipment, supplies and technology with a shared focus on academic proficiency across all subject areas and grade levels.

The DE Team observed that the district is working to reestablish a foundation for higher levels of student achievement. This work has been primarily guided and supported during the past two years by the infusion of academic and fiscal management provided by the University of Pittsburgh leadership team. Their work with school leadership certainly provides potential for a supportive infrastructure in the ██████████ schools. At this point in time it appears that most instructional and organizational gains have been made in 'pockets' or among select groups. While these steps forward have been important, the DE Team observed few examples or traits that encompass the system as a whole or act as unifying influences within the district.

Organizing the district for the free flow of ideas, shared resources, and imaginative solutions for what were once thought of as insurmountable problems will take energy and redirection of the school district's many constituencies. Nevertheless, the DE Team observed several infrastructure variables that need to be targeted for attention in order to create a new



Excerpts:

The ██████████ School District Improvement Plan

December 20, 2000

*Prepared by the  
██████████ School District  
Empowerment Team*

- ◆ *The SBDM team shall be the initial evaluator of each school's goal achievement and site-based procedures. These evaluations will be presented to the superintendent who will present them to the school board.*

## SCHOOL SELECTION

### FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*By September 1, 2001:*

- ◆ *The District shall continue to allow voluntary selection among the elementary schools as space permits. Counselors, administrators and teachers shall be prepared to counsel parents on the positive effects of remaining in the same school for the full school year.*

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## MAINTAINING A SAFE AND SECURE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

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- ♦ *The District shall lead a concerted effort with government officials, organizations, churches and businesses to improve the public image of ██████████ and the ██████████ schools.*
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- ♦ *The District shall provide models of success for students, teachers and School Board members relying upon ██████████ graduates and urban school reform efforts as a way to maintain momentum toward the goal of becoming a district known for achieving academic excellence.*

Excerpts:

The [REDACTED] School District Improvement Plan

December 20, 2000

*Prepared by the  
[REDACTED] School District  
Empowerment Team*

## INTRODUCTION

In May of 2000, the Education Empowerment Act, designed to motivate struggling school Districts to institute dramatic improvements in their policies and practices, was signed into law in Pennsylvania. On August 23, 2000, the Borough of ██████████ School District appointed an Empowerment Team to comply with Act 16 of 2000, the Education Empowerment Act. The District was added to the state's empowerment list because of a history of low-test scores on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). Act 16 stipulates that a District shall be placed on the empowerment list, if at least 50% of its students score in the "bottom-measured group of 25 per centum or below basic level of performance on the PSSA in math and reading in the most recent two school years for which scores are available." ██████████ scores have fallen into this category for several years, averaging 52.8% of its students over the 1997-1999 assessments.

Upon being placed on the list, the ██████████ School District immediately complied with the law and established an eleven member Empowerment Team: one member of the school board; the superintendent; the District business manager; a school principal; a District school teacher; two parents of students who attend District schools; a local representative of business; a local community leader, and two members of the general public.

The Team was charged under Act 16 with the task of developing a School District Improvement Plan that would "set forth specific methods and goals for improving the educational performance of each district school and the school district," as well as include information addressing the following ten points:

- ◆ Identification of district-wide academic standards that meet or exceed the state's current academic standards.
- ◆ Performance goals, benchmarks and timetables to improve academic performance for the school district (and each school in the district) that will enable it to be removed from the empowerment list.
- ◆ Revisions to curriculum, instructional practices, and programming that will enable students to attain the state's current academic standards.
- ◆ A system of assessments to measure the performance of the school district, each school in the district, and students in meeting the state's current academic standards.
- ◆ A system of academic accountability that provides specific consequences for students, each school in the school district, and administrators for attaining or failing to attain levels of academic performance set forth in the school district improvement plan.
- ◆ Specific procedures to inform parents or guardians and the community of the performance of each school in the district and to increase their levels of participation.
- ◆ Specific policies and procedures to increase the authority given to individual schools and the responsibility for the performance levels of individual schools, including granting individual schools greater control of their personnel, budgets, and educational programs.
- ◆ A system of school selection that, to the greatest extent possible, allows parents to choose the public school in the district that their child can attend.
- ◆ Professional development activities and programs that will assist teachers and administrators in enabling students to attain academic standards.
- ◆ Policies and procedures to assure a safe and secure environment in schools in the district.

## EMPOWERMENT PLAN PROCESS

The creation of the [REDACTED] School Improvement Plan involved hundreds of individuals working collaboratively over a four-month period. The Empowerment Team itself spent thousands of hours in this process, dividing its work into four major areas. First, it gathered as much information as possible with respect to virtually every aspect of District operations, from classroom instruction to school safety and security. Second, it sought advice from highly regarded specialists in education reform. Third, it sought and received invaluable guidance and recommendations from primary “stakeholders,” including teachers, students, administrators, parents, school board members, community leaders and interested residents. Fourth, in revising the plan, the team synthesized the information it had gathered, gave priority to problem areas and opportunities to be addressed, devised timelines for implementation of plan components that took into account the District’s limited resources and bracing challenges, and adhered to an iterative drafting process that involved circulation of multiple drafts among all members. The team was aided at every step in this effort by the professional staff support of the Pennsylvania Economy League.

The Empowerment Team met approximately twenty times as a full group, including:

- three public hearings;
- information-gathering sessions with teachers, principals, parents and students;
- consultations with education specialists representing the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh, the Education Policy and Issues Center, the University of Pittsburgh School of Education, and the Pennsylvania Department of Education;
- consultations with the team’s state-appointed Academic Advisory Team;
- an information-gathering session with the Executive Committee of the [REDACTED] Education Association, representing the [REDACTED] teachers.
- In addition, Team members, Advisory Team members and staff met individually, in small groups and in subcommittees on at least seventy-five other occasions to:
  - conduct “learning walks” in each of the District’s five schools;
  - meet privately with each building principal, most on several occasions;
  - meet with small “focus groups” of teachers from each building, following analysis of a 50-item, written, confidential survey that was distributed to all District teachers and completed by an astounding 50%;
  - interview individual students at the high school;
  - consult with education specialists, foundation program directors and business leaders;
  - attend professional workshops and conferences sponsored by the University of Pittsburgh’s Institute for Learning and the Education Policy and Leadership Center;
  - consult with District and community decision-makers about counseling, special education and school safety.

## PLAN COMPONENTS

### PERFORMANCE GOALS, BENCHMARKS, AND TIMETABLES

#### *Year 1            2000-2001 School Year*

- ♦ *The District shall set high academic standards for all students by adopting the New Standards and Primary Literacy Standards.*

#### *Years 1-3        2000-2003 School Years*

- ♦ *The District shall implement a program of increasing student achievement through a consistent and comprehensive focus on professional development for all staff members within the District.*
- ♦ *The District shall create teacher capacity to support and nurture a continuous learning environment focusing on student achievement.*
- ♦ *The District shall develop partnerships with organizations in the region that will enhance student achievement and address student needs.*

#### *Year 2            2001-2002 School Year*

- ♦ *The District shall review its policies and procedures to align them with the new focus on academic achievement.*

#### *Year 3            2002-2003 School Year*

- ♦ *By the end of year 3, the District shall become eligible to be removed from the empowerment list in accordance with the requirements set forth in Act 16 of 2000 as outlined in the table below.*

## STANDARDS

### FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*By March 31, 2001:*

- ♦ *The District shall formally adopt by resolution the New Standards. The New Standards were developed by a partnership between the Learning Research and Development Center (LRDC) at the University of Pittsburgh and the National Center on Education and the Economy.*
- ♦ *The District shall formally adopt by resolution the Primary Literacy Standards. The Primary Literacy Standards were developed by a partnership between LRDC and the National Center on Education and the Economy.*

## CURRICULUM

### FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*By March 31, 2001:*

- ♦ *The Pittsburgh Foundation has awarded a grant to the district to help establish the position of Director of Teaching and Learning. The Empowerment Team authorizes the use of Empowerment Grant funds to supplement support for this position, providing the Director possesses expertise with the Primary Literacy Standards and the New Standards.*

*By September 30, 2001:*

- ♦ *The District shall conduct an audit designed to ensure that all curricular content, instructional materials and instructional practices reflect the District's commitment to the framework for student achievement implicit in the Primary Literacy Standards and the New Standards.*
- ♦ *The District shall conduct an audit to ensure that there is a consistent curriculum for grades K-12 in alignment with the Primary Literacy Standards and the New Standards.*

*By September 1, 2002:*

- ♦ *The District shall provide uniform programs in reading and math across all elementary schools, to be phased in at appropriate grade levels as capacity and professional development allow.*
- ♦ *The District shall integrate the curriculum and the arts program.*
- ♦ *The District shall enhance the gifted program for students in the middle and high schools.*
- ♦ *The District shall provide ongoing curriculum development.*

## INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

### FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*By September 1, 2001:*

- ♦ *The District shall increase the time devoted to literacy and math to two hours each per day for students not meeting the standards as defined by the Primary Literacy Standards and the New Standards.*
- ♦ *The District shall use empowerment grant funds to provide additional support to principals so that they may enhance their roles as instructional leaders.*
- ♦ *The District shall provide one master teacher coach in each school to accommodate its commitment to teaching to the New Standards.*
- ♦ *The District shall use empowerment grant funds to provide technology management for its Center of Excellence.*
- ♦ *The District shall provide reading and math assessments for all beginning and mid-year entering students that are consistent with the Primary Literacy Standards and the New Standards.*



## ACCOUNTABILITY, INCENTIVES AND CONSEQUENCES

### FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*By June 30, 2001:*

- ◆ *The District shall create [REDACTED] Academic Teams comprised of students and teachers in the 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades to develop strategies and incentives for improving performance on the PSSA exams.*
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- ◆ *The District shall provide remediation and additional instruction for students who do not meet or exceed the standards as defined by the Primary Literacy Standards and the New Standards.*
- ◆ *The District shall conduct an independent audit of the "Success For All" reading program.*

*By September 1, 2002:*

- ◆ *The District shall require administrators of schools that do not meet the performance goals defined in the Performance Goals, Benchmarks and Timetables section after one year to provide a self-analysis with an improvement action plan.*

*By September 1, 2003:*

- ◆ *The District shall conduct an assessment of schools that do not meet the performance goals defined in the Performance Goals, Benchmarks and Timetables section after two consecutive years.*
- ◆ *The District shall take whatever action is necessary to ensure that the performance goals are met.*

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*By March 31, 2001:*

- ◆ *The District shall conduct an audit of its current professional development activities.*
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- ◆ *The District shall provide leadership training to the board, superintendent, principals and administrators focusing on instructional leadership, consistent with the District's commitment to the New Standards.*

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- ♦ *The District shall provide ongoing professional development to the teachers selected to be master teacher coaches.*
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- ♦ *The District shall provide professional development in using technology to complement training around the New Standards.*

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- ♦ *The District shall provide professional development to all staff around conflict management, cultural sensitivity, parental involvement and special education.*

## **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND REPORTING**

### **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

*By October 31, 2001:*

- ♦ *The District shall use empowerment funds to contract for a grant writer for [REDACTED] and for joint grant applications with other school districts and agencies, especially other empowerment districts. Replacing empowerment funds with the support from other services by the end of the plan will be a major responsibility of the grant writer.*

*By December 31, 2001:*

- ♦ *The District shall increase the number and effectiveness of meetings with parents by taking meetings to organizations where parents already meet regularly, in addition to offering meetings at the schools.*
- ♦ *The District shall contact churches and other appropriate organizations in [REDACTED] to begin an intensive long-term public effort to change the view of parental responsibility in the community.*
- ♦ *The District shall utilize empowerment funds to hire staff or an agency to act as the Coordinator of Social Services. This function must be self-funding at the end of the empowerment designation.*
- ♦ *The District shall research models of "Community Schools" to integrate the community into the support of the schools to the maximum extent possible.*

*By January 31, 2002:*

- ♦ *The Coordinator of Social Services shall compile a database of services available to [REDACTED] residents and make it available in a format similar to the United Way's Where to Turn.*
- ♦ *Some social services shall be located within the schools, and the Coordinator of Social Services shall continue to plan for the co-location of additional support services inside, or very near the schools.*

- ♦ *The SBDM team shall be the initial evaluator of each school's goal achievement and site-based procedures. These evaluations will be presented to the superintendent who will present them to the school board.*

## SCHOOL SELECTION

### FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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- ◆ *The District shall provide reading and math assessments for all beginning and mid-year entering students that are consistent with the Primary Literacy Standards and the New Standards.*



- ♦ *Modeled after the "Read To Succeed" program, the District shall develop a remedial program and a new enrichment program, for math in grades K-12 and for reading in grades 4-12.*
- ♦ *The District shall use data from student profiles to analyze student performance and make recommendations for individual student improvement.*
- ♦ *The District shall restructure the high school schedule to accommodate block scheduling of classes, integration of courses when possible and keeping groups of students together.*
- ♦ *In conjunction with its teacher union representatives, the District shall make every effort to ensure common, uninterrupted planning time for reading, writing and math teachers. The District shall also make additional accommodations to permit more frequent and longer grade-level meetings.*
- ♦ *The District shall search for and subsequently implement a retention policy that has resulted in improved academic performance for students in urban school districts.*
- ♦ *The District shall examine the current discipline policy with staff and agree on consistent discipline implementation throughout the district.*

## **MEASUREMENTS AND ASSESSMENTS**

### **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- ♦ *The District shall continue to use the Pennsylvania System of School Assessments exams (PSSA) to measure academic achievement in math and reading in grades 5, 8 and 11 and to measure achievement in writing in grades 6 and 9, as required by law.*

*By September 1, 2001:*

- ♦ *The District shall use the New Standards Reference Exams to measure academic achievement in math and reading in grades 4, 8 and 10.*
- ♦ *The District shall evaluate and consider the use of other commercial standardized exams to measure academic achievement in math and reading for the grades in which neither the PSSA nor the New Standards exams are given.*
- ♦ *The District shall develop and conduct informal nine-week student assessments that are aligned with the New Standards.*
- ♦ *The District shall continue to develop student profiles to assess and identify individual student needs.*
- ♦ *The District shall consider seeking the assistance of the Education Policy and Issues Center to use and analyze data to make instructional decisions.*

## ACCOUNTABILITY, INCENTIVES AND CONSEQUENCES

### FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*By June 30, 2001:*

- ◆ *The District shall create [REDACTED] Academic Teams comprised of students and teachers in the 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades to develop strategies and incentives for improving performance on the PSSA exams.*
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## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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- ◆ *The District shall provide leadership training to the board, superintendent, principals and administrators focusing on instructional leadership, consistent with the District's commitment to the New Standards.*

- ♦ *The District shall provide professional development to all teachers in the District to prepare them to teach to the New Standards and the Primary Literacy Standards.*

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## **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND REPORTING**

### **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

*By October 31, 2001:*

- ♦ *The District shall use empowerment funds to contract for a grant writer for Wilkinsburg and for joint grant applications with other school districts and agencies, especially other empowerment districts. Replacing empowerment funds with the support from other services by the end of the plan will be a major responsibility of the grant writer.*

*By December 31, 2001:*

- ♦ *The District shall increase the number and effectiveness of meetings with parents by taking meetings to organizations where parents already meet regularly, in addition to offering meetings at the schools.*
- ♦ *The District shall contact churches and other appropriate organizations in ██████████ to begin an intensive long-term public effort to change the view of parental responsibility in the community.*
- ♦ *The District shall utilize empowerment funds to hire staff or an agency to act as the Coordinator of Social Services. This function must be self-funding at the end of the empowerment designation.*
- ♦ *The District shall research models of "Community Schools" to integrate the community into the support of the schools to the maximum extent possible.*

*By January 31, 2002:*

- ♦ *The Coordinator of Social Services shall compile a database of services available to ██████████ residents and make it available in a format similar to the United Way's Where to Turn.*
- ♦ *Some social services shall be located within the schools, and the Coordinator of Social Services shall continue to plan for the co-location of additional support services inside, or very near the schools.*

- ◆ *Subject to the availability of volunteers, the District shall implement a welcoming and orientation procedure for families moving into ██████████ whose children attend the public schools.*

*By September 30, 2002:*

- ◆ *The District shall include training for staff in maintaining successful positive contact with parents as part of its professional development program. Empowerment funds shall be used for this purpose.*

## **SITE-BASED SCHOOL MANAGEMENT**

### **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

*By June 30, 2001:*

- ◆ *The District shall begin to research models of successful site-based school management including models for successful training of staff.*

*By March 31, 2002:*

- ◆ *The District shall set broad parameters for Site-Based Decision-Making (SBDM) teams. The District shall form its own SBDM team to help set these parameters and assist with decision-making throughout the site-based management process.*
- ◆ *The middle school and high school shall accelerate implementation of full site-based management as a pilot for the program. This shall include the formation of a Site-Based Decision-Making (SBDM) team that includes student representation.*

*By September 30, 2002:*

- ◆ *All appropriate District staff, parents and board members shall be trained in site-based management of schools. Each elementary school shall have established a SBDM team that includes, at a minimum, the principal, teacher representatives and parent representatives.*

*By December 31, 2002:*

- ◆ *The SBDM team at each elementary school shall determine whether or not the school will participate in full site-based management. If the school decides to adopt formal site-based management, the SBDM team shall determine the areas and form of site-based management that will be adopted by each school within a pre-determined framework of policies set by the school board and the superintendent.*
- ◆ *A formal written agreement between the school and the superintendent shall be negotiated and approved prior to full implementation of site-based management. It will describe the responsibilities and duties of everyone involved in the site-based management model.*

*By September 30, 2003:*

- ◆ *All schools that decided to implement site-based management should be fully operating under the terms of their agreements, which shall include an internal evaluation process.*

SHARED VALUES, MISSION, & VISION:

██████████ ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

██████████ School District

Shared Values

The ██████████ Elementary School staff believes that:

All students can learn to their fullest potential.

All students can learn the literacy, math, and communication skills necessary to function as productive adults within their communities.

All students learn best when they have appropriate opportunities for learning and are engaged in the learning process.

Every student can become a contributing member of society when provided with the interventions necessary to achieve academic and social success.

Teachers have a direct impact on the academic and social success of their students.

The collaboration of all stakeholders is imperative if our school is going to enable students to become confident, self-directed, life long learners.

Monitoring student achievement is the collective responsibility of the entire learning community.

Students benefit when positive relationships and mutual respect are the norms among students, staff, parents, and the community.

Mission

██████████ Elementary School will work toward providing an environment conducive to learning and a well balanced curriculum delivered by a highly qualified staff.

██████████ Elementary School will produce competent students who will succeed at their next level of endeavor and who will believe in the dignity of themselves and others.

██████████ Elementary School will provide an opportunity for all students and adults to gain knowledge and move along the continuum of learning.

██████████ Elementary School will use child-centered decision-making to create a positive climate that supports life-long learning for children and adults.

Our Vision

The ██████████ Elementary School staff envisions a future in which it provides a rigorous and competitive academic and social education for all of its students within an urban setting.

The ██████████ Elementary School staff foresees a time when teachers are personally and professionally motivated and fulfilled because of the wide array of professional development opportunities that it offers and because of a work environment that encourages collegiality, creativity, and flexible of pedagogical approaches.

The ██████████ Elementary School staff foresees a time when it is taking full advantage of the region's rich resources by partnering with its education, cultural, business, and civic sectors to enhance its offerings and provide the social safety net that has become an integral part of the national agenda for those in need.

The ██████████ Elementary School staff foresees a time when our schools will be used for education during the day, for remediation and enrichment after school, for adult education and social service activities in the evenings, and for cultural and recreational activities on weekends.

The ██████████ Elementary School staff looks toward to a future when parents are not only just actively involved in the school but are leaving private and parochial schools to enroll their children in our school and reap the benefits of its rigorous academic program.

## ACTION SEQUENCE FOR MATH

District/School /Team:                      SchoolLead Person(s): Math Planning TeamDate: November 19, 2004

**Student Achievement Improvement Target [or educational practices(s) to be improved]:** Increase from 30.5% to 45% the number of students proficient in math as measured by the PSSA test administered in the spring of 2005.

### Step 1: DATA

("Where are we now?")

*Summarize highlights of your analyses of student data and your reflection on the effectiveness of current educational practices. Use the Guiding Questions and data from multiple sources and time-periods to isolate "root causes" of the current status.*

All students met AYP in math through the use of a 2-year proficiency average of 30.5% and a confidence interval. The actual 1-year proficiency percentage in 2004 was 20%, a decrease of 45.2% since 2003, when the proficiency percentage was 36.5%. In addition, the percentage of students achieving at the below basic level rose to 62.2%, contrasted with 36.5% in 2003.

Average percentages of subscale (standards) items correct ranged from 36%-54%, contrasted with a range of 41%-69% in 2003. At 35% was mathematical problem solving and communication (contrasted with 41% in the previous year) and statistics and data analysis (contrasted with 56% in 2003). At 54% was geometry (contrasted with 63% in 2003). Average percentages correct fell under 50% for 8 subscales and at 50% or above for 5 subscales. In 2003, percentages correct fell under 50% for 3 subscales, above 50% for 5 subscales, and at 60% or above for 5 subscales.

Upon reflection about the effectiveness of current educational practices, it is felt that these assessment results have their origins in, or may be explained by, the following root causes:

1. Absence of a math tutoring program.
2. An unusually high transfer rate among teachers.
3. Absence of math coaching.
4. Less than adequate parent involvement (e.g., parents not signing off on homework using daily assignment sheets).
5. High incidence of serious student misbehavior resulting in their dismissal from classes.
6. Morning tardiness resulting in missed instruction.
7. Inconsistent instruction in previous years in problem-solving techniques and strategies.

### Step 2: DESIGN

("Where do we want to go next?")

*Based on the most important "root causes" identified in Step 1, identify the "vital few" (2 to 4) research-based or promising strategies you will implement. Emphasize strategies that enhance instructional practices and build capacity of teachers, staff & administration.*

1. Use data to improve instruction.
2. Individualize instruction.
3. Focus on development of students' problem solving skills and strategies.
4. Implement a consistent home-school math connection.
5. Resume participation in the ALE MSP professional development program beginning in the 2005-2006 school year.

NOTE:            Elementary School is identified as an Improvement I school. Accordingly, in September 2004 the district sent letters to the parents and guardians of all            students which read, in part:

A school can fail to make AYP even if it misses just one of its targets. This is what happened at            Elementary School, where students met 12 of its 13 AYP targets but missed the reading target. . . . The Pennsylvania Department of Education says that "a school that misses only one target will not meet AYP" — but this does not mean it is a failing school. Rather, AYP indicates to school leadership that areas of opportunity exist." I want you to know that at            School . . . and at all of the schools in

the [REDACTED] School District - we are seizing these areas of opportunity to improve all aspects of school performance. Some of the actions that we are taking are: extending our programs into the summer months, using excellent new classroom materials, and making social services available to address non-academic problems that interfere with learning.

Even with these improvements, the NCLB law requires us to notify you that **you have the option of transferring your children to another elementary school within the district.** If you would like to exercise your right to transfer your children . . . please complete the attached form and return it to us by September 27<sup>th</sup> so that we can make the proper arrangements.

In addition, parents will be notified in writing about [REDACTED] the School's school improvement identification, plus the various state and federal requirements thereby entailed, through the [REDACTED] School District's annual "report card," which is mailed to all parents and made available, in addition, on the district's web site at:

[http://www.\[REDACTED\]12.pa.us/home.cfm](http://www.[REDACTED]12.pa.us/home.cfm)

NOTE [REDACTED] School and district administrators engaged in significant consultation with parents, school staff, LEA staff, and outside experts during the development of this School Improvement Plan.

## ACTION SEQUENCE FOR MATH

District/School / Team: **[REDACTED] School**Lead Person(s): **Math Planning Team**Date: **November 19, 2004**

★ **Student Achievement Improvement Target [or educational practices(s) to be improved]: Increase from 30.5% to 45% the number of students proficient in math as measured by the PSSA test administered in the spring of 2005.**

**Step 3: DELIVERY**

("How are we going to get there?")

*Detail the specific tasks to be completed in order to successfully implement each of the research based or promising strategies you selected in Step 2. Complete each column. Use additional sheets, as needed.*

| What needs to be done?<br>Specific Actions to improve educational practices   | By When?<br>Start/End<br>Date   | By Whom?<br>Persons Involved<br>(* denotes lead<br>person)  | With What?<br>Resources Required<br>& Funding Source | Evidence of Effectiveness? How will we know our<br>educational practices are working?   |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| 1. Use data to improve instruction.   |   |   |  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement "data days" on which teams of administrators and specialists from the district and the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Urban Education and elsewhere visit with teachers and administrators to discuss assessment data from multiple sources. The purpose of these sessions will be to plan for individualizing instruction and flexible groupings, based on students' demonstrated needs. A second purpose of these sessions is to ensure high expectations and access to challenging learning opportunities for all students, with particular attention to the needs of sub-groups.</li> </ul> | Twice monthly (once for math, once for reading), from September through March, every year for the foreseeable future. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Assessment/data specialists from the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Urban Education.</li> <li>* The school's principal and math coach.</li> <li>* All of the school's teachers who choose to attend.</li> </ul> | All resources are in place.                          | Classroom observations will ensure that decisions taken during data days meetings about individualizing instruction and flexible grouping are being implemented. In addition, teachers will bring and review student work and assessments, along with Everyday Math charts, to ensure that all students are experiencing all content, rigor, and relevance. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informal and formal classroom observations, learning walks, and grade-level meetings will be conducted in order to ensure that supporting instruction is a top priority of the principal and administrative team.</li> </ul>   | For the foreseeable future, beginning in September 2004, and continuing throughout                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Principal.</li> <li>* Administrative staff.</li> </ul>   | All resources are in place.                          | Copies of observation notes, feedback from informal observations and learning walks, and grade-level meeting minutes will be shared with the staff.   |



|  |           |  |  |  |  |
|--|-----------|--|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adhere to EAP tutoring guidelines for eligibility as a method for identifying struggling students for intervention.</li> </ul>  | the year. | Ongoing for the foreseeable future, beginning in November 2004.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school's principal.</li> <li>* The school's math coach and guidance counselor.</li> </ul> | Funding for teachers' salaries has been provided by the Educational Assistance Program (EAP) and a grant from the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCEd) tutoring initiative. Funding for transportation, snacks, and dinner has been provided by a 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center grant. | At least 50% of students who enroll in the school's tutoring initiatives will be eligible for services under EAP guidelines. Achievement outcomes have been established by the AIB (HCS), in accordance with EAP guidelines that "providers will make significant academic progress with at least 80% of the students who receive tutoring." |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hold regularly scheduled grade-level meetings to further "mine" assessment data as a method for individualizing instruction and implementing flexible grouping strategies.</li> </ul> |           | Ongoing for the foreseeable future, beginning in September 2004.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school's principal and math coach.</li> <li>* All teachers.</li> </ul>                    | All resources are in place.  | Classroom observations will ensure that decisions taken during grade-level meetings about individualizing instruction and flexible grouping are being implemented.   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilize building and district walkthroughs as a means to improve instructional strategies.</li> </ul>   |           | Ongoing for the foreseeable future.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The building's administrative team.</li> <li>* Teachers and math coaches.</li> </ul>          | All resources are in place.  | Logs from walkthrough debriefing meetings will be consulted to inform instruction.   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop consistent assessment tools across classroom grade levels that provide adequate data for monitoring instruction.</li> </ul>   |           | Ongoing for the foreseeable future, beginning in October 2004. Assessments will be given at the end of each unit of study, at a minimum. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The building principal.</li> <li>* Assistant principal, teachers, and coaches.</li> </ul>     | Grade-level meetings for assessment training (budgeted).   | Minutes from grade-level meetings will document development and use of assessment tools.   |

|  |  |  |   |   |
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| 2. Individualize instruction.  |  |  |   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Institute a tutoring initiative under the state's IAP guidelines.</li> </ul>  | Ongoing for the foreseeable future, beginning in October 2004. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school's principal and math coach.</li> <li>The school's guidance counselor, participating teachers, and students.</li> </ul> | Funding for teachers' salaries has been provided by the Pennsylvania Educational Assistance Program (EAP) and a grant from the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCEd) tutoring initiative. Funding for transportation, snacks, and dinner has been provided by a 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center grant. | Achievement outcomes have been established by the Allegheny Intermediate Unit, in accordance with IAP guidelines that "providers will make significant academic progress with at least 80% of the students who receive tutoring." |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement pull-out and push-in interventions by math coach during the school day.</li> </ul>  | Ongoing, beginning in September 2004.                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Math coach.</li> <li>Intervention specialist.</li> </ul>  | All resources are in place.   | Student achievement will be tracked through regular assessments and portfolios.   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Realign the structure of the building's child study intervention program to allow for intervention with at risk students.</li> </ul>  | Ongoing, as of September 2004.                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child study coordinator.</li> <li>Intervention specialist and teachers.</li> </ul>  | All resources are in place.   | At-risk students will receive assistance within the classroom or be referred for MDE.   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to use behavioral specialist to work to develop strategies to enable students with behavioral problems to remain in the classrooms so they can maximize the benefit of instruction.</li> </ul> | Ongoing for the foreseeable future.                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The building's core discipline team.</li> <li>Consultant Dr. [REDACTED]</li> </ul>  | Budgeted: 2 days a week @ \$40 an hour for consultant.  | Fewer office referrals and/or more time that students remain in class for instruction.  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use IEP meetings and progress monitoring as a means of tracking achievement of special education students.</li> </ul>   | Ongoing for the foreseeable future.                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The building principal.</li> <li>Assistant principal, special education supervisor, special education</li> </ul>                  | All resources are in place.   | Minutes from IEP meetings will reflect the use of achievement data to inform instruction.   |

|   |   |   |  |  |
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|   |   | teachers.   |  |  |
| 3. Focus on development of students' problem-solving skills and strategies.   |   |   |  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Institute Problem-solving Fridays, featuring the use of math coaches to co-teach problem-solving activities.</li> </ul>  | Ongoing, beginning in September 2004.                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school's principal.</li> <li>The school's child study intervention staff, teachers, and students.</li> </ul> | All resources are in place.  | Increase in math achievement approaching the state's 2005 proficiency target of 45%.   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Align Everyday Math instruction (the district's core program) with the Pennsylvania standards/assessment anchors, using "eligible content."</li> </ul>   | Ongoing for the foreseeable future.                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school's math coach.</li> <li>The district's math coach/consultant.</li> <li>All teachers.</li> </ul>        | All resources are in place.  | Teachers have color-coded their teacher manuals to flag standards-eligible content.  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use a consistent K-6 rubric for classroom instruction.</li> </ul>  | Ongoing for the foreseeable future.                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school's math coach.</li> <li>The district's math coach/consultant.</li> </ul>                               | All resources are in place.  | Observation of student problem-solving tasks with the rubric attached.   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Align classroom problem-solving tasks with the NCTM standards and with state standards.</li> </ul>   | Ongoing for the foreseeable future.                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school's teachers.</li> <li>The math coach and consultant.</li> </ul>  | All resources are in place for 2004-2005. In 2005-2006, funding for the math consultant will have to be secured. | Increase in math achievement approaching the state's 2005 proficiency target of 45%. In addition, students will exhibit increased use of "accountable talk strategies," as demonstrated through coaching.  |
| 4. Implement a consistent home-school math connection.  |   |   |  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to hold Family Math Nights, featuring problem-solving activities and games linked to grade level standards. During these activities, children are afforded opportunities to teach the adults in their lives.</li> </ul>                         | Beginning in November 2004, monthly for the foreseeable future. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school's math coach.</li> <li>The district's math coach/consultant.</li> </ul>                               | Prizes and additional games (e.g., card decks, multiplication bingo, dice games), all budgeted.                  | 50% parent participation.  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to follow the building's "PSSA calendar" for continuous review of concepts and skills that have already been introduced. A home-school partnership, PSSA calendar activities include homeroom teachers providing students with daily</li> </ul> | Monthly, beginning in December 2004, through                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school's principal.</li> <li>The school's teachers, learning support staff, math</li> </ul>                  | Journals and incentives for completed work will be purchased with available funding.                             | Measures of effectiveness will include a 75% return rate of journals with nightly assignments completed and documented, plus a rate of 100% correct for journal math problems. (Time is allotted during the school day for teachers to examine completed jour- |

|  |   |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| <p>journals and homework assignments that review math concepts that are aligned with eligible content. Students and their families are then asked to record their at-home work in the journals over an adult's signature.</p>  | <p>March 2005, for the foreseeable future.</p>              | <p>coaches, students, and families.</p>   |   | <p>nal problems and to suggest corrections when necessary. Students are not "marked down" for incorrect responses, no matter how often corrections are required. The goal of these exercises is continual learning.)</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to hold PSSA dinners, informational meetings to familiarize parents with the format and requirements of the PSSA - including release items - in order that they might assist their children in preparing to take the test. Parents will also be familiarized with the Pennsylvania standards/assessment anchors for math.</li> </ul> | <p>Once yearly in February, for the foreseeable future.</p> | <p>* Fifth grade teachers.<br/>* School administrators, learning support staff, math coach, students, and families.</p> | <p>The funding is in place for all items required for staging the dinners. All materials for parents release items, PDE's testing calendar, PDE's recommended test-taking strategies, and PDE's testing policies - are easily acquired at minimal expense, and funding is in place.</p> | <p>Evidence of effectiveness will include a 75% parent participation rate.</p>   |

## ACTION SEQUENCE FOR MATH

District/School/Team:                     SchoolLead Person(s): Math Planning TeamDate: November 19, 2004

**Student Achievement Improvement Target [or educational practices(s) to be improved]:** Increase from 30.5% to 45% the number of students proficient in math as measured by the PSSA test administered in the spring of 2005.

### Step 4: DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLE

("What additional skills/training do we need?")

*List the additional skills, training, continuous learning, etc. needed to successfully carry out the tasks outlined in Step 3. Be sure to include them as priorities on your Professional Development Calendar.*

Continue professional development activities, featuring:

1. A math coach assigned to            School, plus a floating math coach/consultant assigned to the district's three elementary schools. These individuals will continue to utilize a consistent coaching model grounded in best practices. Among their efforts will be working with teachers to modify the Everyday Math curriculum to make it more conceptual, thus encouraging students to explain the thinking behind their answers while being accountable to one another for the learning that ensues.
2. Continuing inservice workshops. Recent workshops have focused on teaching problem-solving strategies.
3. Providing teachers with the resources they need to support problem-solving skills instruction, including: (a) continuing with the coaching model described throughout this plan, (b) aligning Everyday Math instruction with the NCTM standards, (c) supplying teachers with math tasks written by the coaches that are aligned with the "big idea" in mathematics. Each task includes a list of materials required for completion of the task, a narrative or "story," one or more "problems" that the students are asked to address, and instructional cues for the teachers.
4. Select a            staffer to participate in a district-wide effort to resume participation in the AIO Math Science Partnership (MSP) professional development program during the 2005-2006 school year.
5. Coaches, teachers, and administrators will collaborate to develop a yearly professional development calendar that ensures that continuous learning for all staff is coherent and consistently monitored. The calendar will also ensure direct linkages between what students have not learned well and what the staff needs to learn/know/be able to do.

Note:            Elementary School will not spend less than 10% of the Title I funds made available to it on professional development activities.

### Step 5: DOCUMENTATION

("How do we track our progress?")

*Summarize the evidence you will gather in the aggregate to demonstrate the effectiveness of your chosen research, based on promising strategy. Identify the documentation process and time interval collecting the evidence.*

The following information will be gathered:

1. Logs of "Data Days" and grade level meetings, specifically decisions taken about individualizing instruction and flexible grouping based on data analyses.
2. The eligibility of students enrolled in the district's tutoring initiatives will be continuously tracked and recorded on Excel spreadsheets by a staffer of the district's Chief Operating Office, according to the guidelines established in the district's EAP proposal. Specifically: KINDERGARTEN AND GRADE 1: A rating of "beginning" or "developing" on the composite indicator of ability as determined by the end-of-year administration of the Everyday Math assessment. GRADES 2, 3, and 5: Composite scores below the prior year's appropriate grade level on the 2004 administration of the Terra Nova. GRADE 4: A scaled score below 1127 on the 2004 administration of the PSSA. GRADE 6: Scores below the proficient level on the 2004 administration of the PSSA.
3. Evidence of students' having made sufficient progress in tutoring to warrant discontinuing services will be gathered and recorded in students' files, according to the following standards and schedule, by the school's teachers and math coach: KINDERGARTEN AND GRADES 1-5: A rating of "secure" on the composite indicator of ability as determined by either the mid-year or end-of-year administration of the Everyday Math assessment.

Everyday Math is the district's core mathematics program for grades K-5. GRADE 6: A rating of "secure" on the composite indicator of ability as determined by either the mid-year or end-of year administration of the Connected Math assessment. Connected Math is the district's core mathematics program for grade 6.

4. Teachers will record in their grade books or students' files the incidence of students' returning their PSSA calendar homework journals with completed work and an adult's signature. The measure of effectiveness for this component of the school's plan is a 75% return rate of journals with nightly assignments completed and documented. Teachers will also track the rate of correctness of students' journal assignments, either in their grade books or in students' files.
5. A building staffer will assume responsibility for recording the presence of family members at Math Nights and PSSA Dinners, in order to determine rate of attendance.
6. Logs of walkthrough debriefing meetings.
7. A building staffer will be assigned the responsibility for tracking the number of office referrals and student time in class, in order to assess the effectiveness of the use of a behavioral specialist to develop strategies to enable students with behavioral problems to remain in the classrooms so they can maximize the benefit of instruction.
8. Minutes from IEP meetings reflecting the use of achievement data to inform instruction.
9. PSSA test data.

### Step 1: DATA

## Step 2: DESIGN

summer months, using excellent new classroom materials, and making social services available to address non-academic problems that interfere with learning.

Even with these improvements, the NCLB law requires us to notify you that **you have the option of transferring your children to another elementary school within the district.** If you would like to exercise your right to transfer your children . . . please complete the attached form and return it to us by September 27<sup>th</sup> so that we can make the proper arrangements.

In addition, parents will be notified in writing about Kelly School's school improvement identification, plus the various state and federal requirements thereby entailed, through the [REDACTED] School District's annual "report card," which is mailed to all parents and made available, in addition, on the district's web site at:

[http://www.\[REDACTED\]k12.pa.us/home.cfm](http://www.[REDACTED]k12.pa.us/home.cfm)

NOTE 2: [REDACTED] School and district administrators engaged in significant consultation with parents, school staff, LEA staff, and outside experts during the development of this School Improvement Plan.



## ACTION SEQUENCE FOR READING

District/School/Team:                     SchoolLead Person(s): Reading Planning TeamDate: November 19, 2004

**Student Achievement Improvement Target [or educational practices(s) to be improved]:** Increase from 33.9% to 54% (the number of students proficient in reading as measured by the PSSA test administered in the spring of 2005).

## Step 3: DELIVERY

("How are we going to get there?")

*Detail the specific tasks to be completed in order to successfully implement each of the research-based or promising strategies you selected in Step 2. Complete each column. Use additional sheets, as needed.*

| What needs to be done?<br>Specific Actions to improve educational practices  | By When?<br>Start/End Date  | By Whom?<br>Persons Involved<br>(* denotes lead person)  | With What?<br>Resources Required<br>& Funding Source | Evidence of Effectiveness? How<br>will we know our educational practices are working?  |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| 1. Use data to improve instruction.  |   |  |  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement "data days" on which teams of administrators and specialists from the district and the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Urban Education and elsewhere visit with teachers and administrators to discuss assessment data from multiple sources. The purpose of these sessions will be to plan for individualizing instruction and flexible groupings, based on students' demonstrated needs. A second purpose of these sessions is to ensure high expectations and access to challenging learning opportunities for all students, with particular attention to the needs of subgroups.</li> </ul> | Twice monthly (once for math, once for reading), from September through March, every year for the foreseeable future. | + Assessment/data specialists from the district and the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Urban Education.<br>* The school's principal and literacy coach.<br>* All of the school's teachers who choose to attend. | All resources are in place.                          | Classroom observations will ensure that decisions taken during data days meetings about individualizing instruction and flexible grouping are being implemented. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informal and formal classroom observations, learning walks, and grade-level meetings will be conducted in order to ensure that supporting instruction is a top priority of the principal and administrative team.</li> </ul>  | For the foreseeable future, beginning in September 2004, and continuing throughout the year.                          | + Principal.<br>* Administrative staff.  | All resources are in place.                          | Copies of observation notes, feedback from informal observations and learning walks, and grade level meeting minutes will be shared with the staff.              |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adhere to EAP tutoring guidelines for eligibility.</li> </ul>   | Ongoing for   | + The school's   | Funding for teach-                                   | At least 50% of students who en-   |

# Exhibit C.3 - Building Improvement Plan 2004

|  |   |   |   |  |
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| <p>as a method for identifying struggling students for intervention.</p>   | <p>the foreseeable future, beginning in November 2004.</p>  | <p>principal.<br/>* The school's literacy coach and guidance counselor.</p>     | <p>ers' salaries has been provided by the Pennsylvania Educational Assistance Program (EAP) and a grant from the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCEED) tutoring initiative. Funding for transportation, snacks, and dinner has been provided by a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center grant.</p> | <p>roll in the school's various tutoring initiatives will be eligible for services under EAP guidelines. Achievement outcomes have been established by the Allegheny Intermediate Unit, in accordance with EAP guidelines that "providers will make significant academic progress with at least 80% of the students who receive tutoring."</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hold regularly scheduled grade-level meetings to further "mine" assessment data as a method for individualizing instruction and implementing flexible grouping strategies.</li> </ul>   | <p>Ongoing for the foreseeable future, beginning in September 2004.</p>   | <p>The school's principal and literacy coach.<br/>* All teachers.</p>           | <p>All resources are in place.</p>  | <p>Classroom observations will ensure that decisions taken during grade-level meetings about individualizing instruction and flexible grouping are being implemented.</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop consistent assessment tools across classroom grade levels that provide adequate data for monitoring instruction.</li> </ul>   | <p>Ongoing for the foreseeable future, beginning in October 2004. Assessments will be given at the end of each unit of study, at a minimum.</p> | <p>The building principal.<br/>* Assistant principal, teachers, and coaches</p> | <p>Grade-level meetings for assessment training (budgeted).</p>   | <p>Minutes from grade-level meetings will document development and use of assessment tools.</p>  |
| <p>2. Adopt evidenced based materials and approaches.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement a new core reading program - Harcourt <i>Trophies</i> - adopted by the faculty beginning in the 2004-2005 school year after an exhaustive selection process.</li> </ul> | <p>Ongoing for the foreseeable future, beginning in September 2004.</p>   | <p>The school's principal and literacy coach.<br/>* All teachers.</p>           | <p>All resources are in place.</p>  | <p>Classroom observations will ensure that Harcourt <i>Trophies</i> is being implemented. The school anticipates increases in reading achievement approaching the state's 84% 2005 proficiency target.</p>   |

|  |   |  |   |   |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Align Harcourt <i>Trophies</i> instruction (the district's core program) with the Pennsylvania standards/assessment anchors, using "eligible content."</li> </ul>             | Ongoing for the foreseeable future.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school's literacy coach.</li> <li>The district's literacy consultant.</li> <li>All teachers.</li> </ul>                           | All resources are in place.   | Teachers have color coded their teacher manuals to flag standards/eligible content.   |
|  | Ongoing for the foreseeable future, beginning in October 2004.                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school's principal and literacy coach.</li> <li>The school's guidance counselor, participating teachers, and students.</li> </ul> | Funding for teachers' salaries has been provided by the Pennsylvania Educational Assistance Program (EAP) and a grant from the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCLD) tutoring initiative. Funding for transportation, snacks, and dinner has been provided by a 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center grant. | Achievement outcomes have been established by the Allegheny Intermediate Unit, in accordance with EAP guidelines that "providers will make significant academic progress with at least 80% of the students who receive tutoring." |
| 3. Realign and/or reinforce the roles of district personnel and community resources.   |   |  |   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use student interns from the University of Pittsburgh's Instruction in Learning 1000 class to assist in implementation of the district's new core reading program.</li> </ul> | Beginning in October 2004 for 6 weeks. Another 6-week round will begin in January 2005. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Principal and Pitt instructor.</li> <li>Teachers sponsoring the interns.</li> </ul>   | All resources are in place.   | Classroom observations of interns will ensure they are applying comprehension skills learning aligned with the Harcourt <i>Trophies</i> program.  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of a series of "literacy nights" designed to help parents learn how to teach their children skills that are aligned to grade-level standards.</li> </ul>       | Ongoing, beginning in September 2004.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school's principal.</li> <li>The school's child study intervention staff, teachers, and students.</li> </ul>                      | Food and materials (e.g., take-home flash cards) are budgeted.  | 50% parent participation.   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reassigning Title I reading specialists as classroom teachers instead of as tutors.</li> </ul>  | Ongoing, beginning in   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chief Academic Officer.</li> </ul>  | On site and off-site AIR RAC training   | Observation of teachers in their  |

# Exhibit C.3 - Building Improvement Plan 2004

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|  | September 2004.                       | * Principal, Title I Reading Specialists.                                 | for selected staff, ongoing.                             | new roles.   |
| • Implement pull-out and push-in interventions by literacy coach during the school day   | Ongoing, beginning in September 2004. | * Literacy coach.<br>* Intervention specialist.                           | All resources are in place.                              | Student achievement will be tracked through regular assessments and portfolios.        |
| • Realign the structure of the building's child study intervention program to allow for intervention with at-risk students.  | Ongoing, beginning in September 2004. | * Child study coordinator.<br>* Intervention specialist and teachers.     | All resources are in place.                              | At risk students will receive assistance within the classroom or be referred for MDE.  |
| • Continue to use behavioral specialist to work to develop strategies to enable students with behavioral problems to remain in the classrooms so they can maximize the benefit of instruction. | Ongoing for the foreseeable future.   | * The building's core discipline team.<br>* Consultant Dr. [REDACTED]     | Budgeted: 2 days a week for \$40 an hour for consultant. | Fewer office referrals and/or more time that students remain in class for instruction. |
| • Utilize building and district walkthroughs as a means to improve instructional strategies.   | Ongoing for the foreseeable future.   | * The building's administrative team.<br>* Teachers and literacy coaches. | All resources are in place.                              | Logs from walkthrough debriefing meetings will be consulted to inform instruction.     |

## ACTION SEQUENCE FOR READING

District/School/Team:                     School                    Lead Person(s): Reading Planning TeamDate: November 19, 2004

**Student Achievement Improvement Target [or educational practices(s) to be improved]:** Increase from 33.9% to 54% the number of students proficient in reading as measured by the PSSA test administered in the spring of 2005.

### Step 4: DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLE

("What additional skills/training do we need?")

*List the additional skills, training, continuous learning, etc. needed to successfully carry out the tasks outlined in Step 3. Be sure to include them as priorities on your Professional Development Calendar.*

PLEASE NOTE THAT AHI STAFFERS HAVE INDICATED THAT THEY WILL INSERT HERE A DESCRIPTION OF THE RAC PROGRAM, IN WHICH THE                     SCHOOL DISTRICT                     IN GENERAL AND KELLY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN PARTICULAR ARE PARTICIPATING.

In addition to RAC staff development (for grades K-3), teachers in grades 4-6 will participate in staff development related to reading comprehension/questioning strategies designed and presented by the Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU).

Finally, coaches, teachers, and administrators will collaborate to develop a yearly professional development calendar that ensures that continuous learning for all staff is coherent and consistently monitored. The calendar will also ensure direct linkages between what students have not learned well and what staff needs to learn/know/be able to do.

Note:            Elementary School will not spend less than 10% of the Title I funds made available to it on professional development activities.

### Step 5: DOCUMENTATION

("How do we track our progress?")

*Summarize the evidence you will gather in the aggregate to demonstrate the effectiveness of your chosen research-based or promising strategy. Identify the documentation process and time interval collecting the evidence.*

The following information will be gathered:

1. The eligibility of students enrolled in the district's tutoring initiatives will be continuously tracked and recorded on Excel spreadsheets by a staffer of the district's Chief Operating Office, according to the guidelines established in the district's EAP proposal. Specifically: KINDERGARTEN AND GRADES 1-3: An instructional intervention recommendation of "intensive" or "strategic" on the September administration of the DIBELS assessment. GRADE 4: A scaled score below 1127 on the 2004 administration of the PSSA. GRADE 5: Composite scores below the prior year's appropriate grade level on the 2004 administration of the Terra Nova. GRADE 6: Scores below the proficient level on the 2004 administration of the PSSA.
2. Evidence of students' having made sufficient progress in tutoring to warrant discontinuing services will be gathered and recorded in students' files, according to the following standards and schedule, by the school's teachers and literacy coach: KINDERGARTEN AND GRADES 1-3: An instructional recommendation of "benchmark" on the January or June administration of the DIBELS assessment. GRADES 4-6: A score at or above 80% correct on each subscale, or at least 38 answers correct out of 54, on either the Harcourt Trophies formative or summative assessment in January and May respectively. Harcourt Trophies is the district's core reading program for grades K-6.

3. Logs of "Data Days" and grade-level meetings, specifically decisions taken about individualizing instruction and flexible grouping based on data analyses.
4. A building staffer will assume responsibility for recording the presence of family members at PSSA Dinners, in order to determine rate of attendance.
5. Logs of walkthrough debriefing meetings.
6. A building staffer will be assigned the responsibility for tracking the number of office referrals and student time in class, in order to assess the effectiveness of the use of a behavioral specialist to develop strategies to enable students with behavioral problems to remain in the classrooms so they can maximize the benefit of instruction.
7. Minutes from IEP meetings reflecting the use of achievement data to inform instruction.
8. PSSA test data.
9. Logs from classroom observations of interns will ensure they are applying comprehension skills learning aligned with the Harcourt *Trophix* program.

## ACTION SEQUENCE FOR IMPROVING ATTENDANCE

Grade/Subject/Team: Elementary AttendanceLead Team: [REDACTED] School Attendance Planning TeamDate: November 19, 2004

**2004-2005 Attendance Improvement Target: 90% or improved daily attendance**

### Step 1: DATA

(Based on evidence and staff reflection, where are we now relative to our attendance goals?)

#### I. State Report

Kelly Elementary School reported a 91.5% daily attendance rate to the Pennsylvania Department of Education for the 2002-2003 school year.

#### II. Current Practices

The [REDACTED] Elementary School's parent coordinator places telephone calls to the parents or guardians of students who miss three consecutive days of school or who exhibit excessive tardiness. The calls are placed to determine (1) if parents or guardians are aware of their children's behavior and (2) if the school may be of assistance in addressing the root causes of poor attendance and tardiness behavior.

The parent coordinator and the school's guidance counselor confer on a weekly basis about the results of each home contact. On a weekly basis, the Child Study Team discusses the cases of students with excessive absences or tardies. Team members include the principal, the assistant principal, the counselor, the child study coordinator, the behavior modification instructor, the school-based therapist, and agency representatives.

The school uses a "chain of contact" for chronic offenders, which is a progressive and escalating succession of action: Calls home are made in turn by the parent coordinator/secretary, the guidance counselor, the child study coordinator, the assistant principal, and the principal.

The school secretary, parent coordinator, and principal send three-day, six-day, and nine-day notices to parents and guardians and, when necessary, refer offenders to the local magistrate for corrective legal action.

School personnel send home attendance certificates with report cards documenting grading-period attendance rates.

Attendance and tardiness are part of the "[REDACTED] Stars" incentive program, which also rewards students for good academic achievement and exemplary behavior. Incentives are also offered to families and students by the parent coordinator.

Referrals are made to outside agencies for home-school issues outside the realm of the classroom (e.g., abuse, neglect, and substance abuse).

### Step 2: DESIGN

(What is our roadmap for improving our students' attendance?)

In addition to the school's current practices, all of which will continue, the following additional practices will be implemented in the 2004-2005 school year and for the foreseeable future.

- ✓ Use of the district's attendance officer to conduct home visits after building level attempts prove unsuccessful.
- ✓ Sending teachers daily attendance bulletins to ensure that they are fully informed about the attendance and tardiness habits of individual students.
- ✓ Instituting grade-level "reward parties" at the conclusion of every nine-week grading period.
- ✓ Prominently displaying an "attendance board" that focuses attention on the classrooms with the best attendance and tardiness records.

## ACTION SEQUENCE FOR IMPROVING TEST PARTICIPATION

Grade/Subject/Team: Elementary Test ParticipationLead Team: [REDACTED] School Test Participation TeamDate: November 19, 2004

**2004-2005 Test Participation Improvement Target: 95% or better test participation**

### Step 1: DATA

(Based on evidence and staff reflection, where are we now relative to our participation goals?)

#### I. AYP Standard

[REDACTED] Elementary School's 2003-2004 PSSA test participation rate was 100% for all students in reading and math.

#### II. Current Practices

- ✓ Letters are sent to all parents and guardians stressing the importance of the PSSA for their children, their school, and their district.
- ✓ Students' fears are allayed with many opportunities to become familiar with the test format and procedures through the use of PSSA release items, beginning nine weeks before test administration.
- ✓ Students are given a small treat following every day's administration.
- ✓ Students and parents participate in a PSSA orientation dinner, during which they hear an explanation of the test format and procedures. In addition, parents are encouraged to sign up for a test preview.
- ✓ The school's support staff facilitates make-up tests.
- ✓ Teachers maintain individual incentive records.

### Step 2: DESIGN

(What is our goal for improving our students' participation?)

Current practices are adequate.



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